

more to be GIVE ME LOVE

defining what we need and want

"Be cautious of the difference between love and lust. Lust can fool you into thinking it's love but love is a much deeper emotion and connection. Take things slow and really make an effort to get to know someone."

Amanda Johnson Martinsen

This Thing Called Love

Oh, love. You are so complicated. You don't fit the mold. You make no sense to me. I need you and want you and must have you. But you seem to slip right through my fingers.

I want to be loved. Unconditionally. For me. As is.
I want love from those who won't give it to me.
I want love to make my life mean something more.
I want love to define my identity.
I want love to uncover my inner worth.

Oh, this thing called love.

I want what you have to offer me.
I want what you're willing to fill in me.
I want what you will do to me.

Love.

I didn't know You were the One.
I didn't realized You came for me.
I didn't get that You'd give Yourself up that way.

How could I know love?
Until I receive the One
who is
love.

*Love is not a feeling;
it's a choice.*

Josie Smith

Is Love Really That Complicated?

What do you think about this thing called love? Does it puzzle you? Chase you? Frustrate you? Evade you? Do you think this thing called love is complicated? Or do you have it all figured out?

There are good reasons why love is complicated, because it is multifaceted and hard to describe within the limitations of our language. We simply do not have enough words to describe the many aspects of love.

We love ice cream and shopping. We love our parents and the boy next door. We love our fur-ball dog and having our nails done at the salon. We love Jesus and basketball.

How is it possible to use the same word, love, to describe all those things?

We simply can't. So love becomes watered-down, misunderstood, complicated, broken-hearted. In order to understand the meaning of love, and why we need it and want it, we have to do a little bit of research. See our Designer God—the one who is love and created love—never defined love by one simple four-letter word. In the New International Version of the Bible, there are 697 entries using the word on love. But this one English word comes from four possible Greek words:

- **agape** is unconditional love
- **phileo** is brotherly love or personal affection and it expects a return
- **thelo** is the desire to do something
- **eros** is sexual love

We experience a need for love in so many ways because we were created by a God who expresses His love for us in so many different ways.

Love Defined by the Cross

If we want to understand what love truly is, we can look at the relationship between God, His son, and His children.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Through Christ's death on the cross, God demonstrated His love for us, his children.

1 John 3:1

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

Jesus proved His love not only for us but also for His Father, being willing to die on our behalf in obedience to God's plan.

LOVE is Jesus dying for YOU! LOVE is unconditional!

Trisha Goddard

1 John 3:16

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for [others].

God's love has and always will be an active living thing. It is evidenced by His action for us. Likewise, our love for God and others should also be evidenced by action. This acting-out-our-love behavior should not only be from a heart motivated to do the "right thing" but also from a desire to express that love authentically.

1 John 5:3

This is love for God: to obey his commands.

There may be times in our relationship with God that we obey Him simply because we should. But ultimately, God desires our obedience out of a heart of love for him. Simply saying, "I love God" doesn't mean much if our life doesn't prove it true. Wouldn't you say the same thing about someone who loves you but never makes time for you, or treats you badly?

Seeing God's Love With Different Lens

When it comes to really understanding love, God has given us a picture to see it in action through the relationship between a husband and wife.

Ephesians 5:25-33

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...He who loves his wife loves himself...However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The marriage relationship is designed to reflect that of Christ to the church, so that as we look at a husband loving his wife (and a wife loving her husband), we can begin to comprehend God's love for us. Gasp. I know. How can that be true when there is a 50% divorce rate in the United States and so many marriages are crumbling while staying together?

Is it any surprise, then, that the enemy of God, Satan, launches his attack directly on marriage? A married couple is one of his prime targets! He tempts a couple to despair, believing all sorts of lies, like:

- I should have never married this person.
- If I was with that other person, I'd be happier.
- This was supposed to feel good.

Satan uses other people, media, pornography, money, fame, and even children to drive a wedge between a husband and wife, and he does it the same way now as he did in the very beginning, through whispering a word of doubt.

Genesis 3:1

"Did God really say?"

Yes, God really told us what to expect from love and how to experience authentic love. He even gave very specific instructions for husbands and wives in Ephesians 5, encouraging a couple to strive for a balance between love and respect and submission and sacrifice. If a couple loves God and wants to honor Him, then that is

"Our marriage counselor said "Love in marriage is like a moving target. Ever changing and you have to work at harder at hitting it as you grow older. Be intentional with your expression of love for each other."

Hunter N' Liz Valls

how they are expected to function in a marriage relationship. Is it hard? Yes, ma'am. But is it possible? Absolutely by the grace of God.

Trust me girls, love and respect are not based on feelings. They are rooted in a decision, that when acted upon produces those feelings. If you can understand this truth early on in your life, you will be better prepared for how to love your spouse in the future, if marriage is part of God's plan for your life.

So Can Love Be A Feeling?

Some might say love is a feeling. But is it really? Or is that a lie from Satan to convince us that the love we have is not legitimate because it doesn't feel like love?

We definitely feel the presence of something, especially when we think it is love. For us girls, our bodies warm all over. A smile breaks forth on our face. Our confidence bubbles with new found zest. But is that love? Or is that hormones and romance?

"Love is the embodiment of so many other things. Forgiveness. Commitment. Grace. Love is a decision. When you decide to love someone it means 'no matter what'. We don't 'fall out of love' ~ we change our decision. And a decision that includes forgiveness, commitment, and grace is a decision that cannot be changed lightly."

Lorna Sparks

Think about it. Even when you see a cute boy take a girl's hand in a movie, that warm fuzzy sensation can overtake you. Or when you day dream about your wedding day? Or when the guy you like grabs your arm on the way out of class? So how can this be love when there isn't even the reality of a honest-to-goodness relationship?

Can our feelings of love truly be an indicator that it is love? Or is that lust we may be undone by?

Lust is a strong sexual desire. But lust is not love. Lust is longing to be satisfied, where your feelings dominate

the truth and offer a promise of a return that does not exist.

SIGNS OF LUST

- You are not friends.
- A preference for keeping the relationship on a fantasy level and not in reality.
- A desire for sexual intimacy but not conversation.
- A focus on looks, not personality.

SIGNS OF {ROMANTIC} LOVE

- You are friends and the feelings for each other keep growing.
- The relationship is rooted in reality not fantasy.
- You can spend hours talking together or enjoying an activity, hobby, sport.
- You're more interested in what is going on in their life than you are in what they can do for you.
- The desire for sexual intimacy comes out of a longing to know each other deeper.
- Looks don't matter as much as personality and character.
- You want to get to know their friends and family.

Is Love An Action?

The promise of love may evoke feelings of "true love" within each of us. But love without action isn't really love as God defines it in Scripture. Look closely at this passage from 1 Corinthians in the Message translation and note every action word {hint, we've pointed it out in bold!}:

1 Corinthians 13:3-7 MSG

Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others,
Isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,

**Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end.**

Hmm. Looks like almost all of that passage is in bold. Do you see all the action captured in this passage? Whether we are in love, in the romantic sense, or in loving relationships with our family and friends, love is something we can see and experience, give and receive. It is more than a feeling. It requires decisions and dedication.

Love never gives up.

Even when the relationship is hard, especially in a marriage, we're not supposed to give up on that commitment. It is a decision that requires action.

Love cares more for others than for self.

That means we get up from the table to go pour the drinks and serve the food, rather than sitting there waiting to be served.

Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.

When our friend wins the race and we come in second and third, we celebrate for her.

Love doesn't strut,

We don't brag or draw attention to ourselves.

Doesn't have a swelled head,

We watch our words and the attitude of our heart, acting in humility rather than being boastful.

Doesn't force itself on others,

We wait for our turn.

Isn't always "me first,"

We're willing to be last.

Doesn't fly off the handle,

We guard our tongue and temper.

Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,

We forgive as we've been forgiven.

Doesn't revel when others grovel,

We extend grace and mercy.

Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,

We put off lies and deception and embrace God's word as truth to live by.

Puts up with anything,

We endure the uncomfortable, unfavorable, inconveniences of others {but not abuse, of course}.

Trusts God always,

We don't give up on God because He doesn't give up on us.

Always looks for the best,

We put off a critical spirit and look for something positive to say and think.

Never looks back,

We don't live chained to the past.

But keeps going to the end.

We press on toward the cross of Christ.

So what do you think. Is love an action or a feeling? How many of those action steps above require a decision to love rather than a feeling of love?

"Love is not a feeling that comes and goes with circumstances~ that is lust! Love takes time and is a commitment that you determine to keep. Love grows and blossoms into an everlasting bond because "God is Love"

Linda Gulli Killeen

The Picture of True Love

When we put together the instructions found in 1 Corinthians 13 on how to love through our actions along with the picture of God's love for us found through looking at the cross and the example of marriage, we can begin to understand a few basic truths.

Love is more than a feeling.

Love is a motion. Filled with emotion.

It is a verb, but it also needs a noun.

We're made for love and to be loved.

We need love and we're designed to give it. It is part of who we are as children of God, made in the image of our Creator, who is the embodiment of love.

1 John 4:8

...God is love.

We are designed to be loved by God and love Him in return. But we are also made to be loved by others -- parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, boyfriend, fiancée, husband.

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Yet these relationships are imperfect because the people in those relationships are imperfect. The effect of sin on this world makes the experience of love imperfect, all the time. Whether or not we see it, each of us has a God-size hole in our heart longing for the perfect love we'll experience in heaven. But on this side of eternity, we are often tempted to fill that hole with anything but God.

A girl without a dad may turn to a boy who seems to need her now. A wife with an angry husband may turn to a friend with a tender heart. A man [whose been abandoned by his parents] may emotionally check out of the relationship with his kids (filling his heart with things that won't ever reject him) like TV and money and career...so he thinks.

**We want this thing called love.
But one person alone can't love us unconditionally and fully.**

Does that leave us hopeless for love? No, it doesn't have to.

Authentic Love This Side of Heaven

God can and will fill up that hole in our heart with His love manifested in many ways through many people. We can taste His love on earth, while we await for the perfect experience of it in Heaven. But it won't look like it does in the movies or on TV shows. God's love comes to us in unexpected and beautiful ways:

- through the reading of His word, when a verse pops off the page and speaks right to your heart
- when a worship song captures your life in such a way you feel like your mind has been read
- a friend gives you a sincere hug just when you are feeling down and sticks with you during trouble
- a godly man steps into a father-like role at a time when you wish your dad was there
- an older mentor-friend sends you an encouraging text reminding you that you're dearly loved
- your mom picks up a shirt for you to wear to the party Friday night and listens while you fret about what to do once you get there
- your sister takes care of your dirty laundry
- your husband cleans up after you when the stomach bug hits you hard

We're so busy looking for romantic love, we miss out all the other types of love God has surrounded us with. We need to look at the people in our lives who are living out 1 Corinthians 13 today, with us and for us, in order to know what love truly is all about. Even if those people never say, "I love you!", they may be the ones that love you the most.

1 John 3:18

...let us know love in word and talk but in deed and truth.

Those people who are giving up of themselves to serve you, care for you, and meet your needs, are loving you in an authentic way.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

They are being used by God to show you that His love, even though they may be doing it imperfectly -- oh, I'm sure imperfectly. But when was the last time you loved someone else perfectly? Only God's love is perfect and while we are still on this earth, it is hard to even understand what that means!

1 John 3:16 -17 MSG

This is how we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves.

Love is a gift. We can't earn it. Nor can we force someone to love us. It comes from the giver, which is demonstrated by their actions and commitment to us. It doesn't have to be done perfectly, but it can be done authentically.

So, are you now ready to go forward with your life with a new definition of love?

Will you thank God for the ways He shows His love for you through Jesus and others?

Will you be one who gives that love to others, too?

"Love is a choice you will have to continually make and that choice is not dependent on emotions."

Jocelyn Hathaway Hutzler