

This is What Should Last
Series: The Greatest of These...
1 Corinthians 13:8; 1 John 4:7-21
May 13, 2018

Today is Mother's Day, a day when we honor our Moms. We learn many things from our Moms.

- My mother taught me religion. She used to say things like, "You better pray that comes out of the carpet."
- My mother taught me medicine: "If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they're going to freeze that way."
- My mother taught me how to be a contortionist: "Will you look at the dirt on the back of your neck!"
- My mother taught me to appreciate a job well done: "If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning!"
- My mother taught me about genetics: "You are just like your father!"
- My mother taught me logic: "Because I said so, that's why."

My mom said that last one a lot to me and my brother. She was a terrific mother. I think about her every time I share this poem at a funeral:

Of all the gifts I can recall,
My Mother's love is greatest of all.
I can't repay the lessons you taught,
When I was small.
Or give you, gift for gift,
Each moment I recall.
I can't return encouragement,
Or loving words of praise,
In quite the way you did for me,
Through all my childhood days.
But there is one gift that I can give,
It's all the love you've earned.
For love is what you always taught,
And love is what I learned!

For the last few weeks, we have been talking about love as we study the Love Chapter, 1 Corinthians 13. I want to invite you to page 5 in your bulletin. We're going to look at two passages this morning.

The first one comes from 1 Corinthians 13:8:

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.¹

Paul stresses here the absolute permanency of love. All the things you and I glory in pass away. Think of all the things we love or at least we say we love that eventually we grow tired of. Every hit TV show that soars into the top spots eventually get canceled. They were hits – Cheers, Big Bang Theory, MASH, The X-Files – yet they were eventually cancelled when ratings dropped. People no longer loved them.

¹ 1 Corinthians 13:8 (NIV)

I have Sirius XM radio, and one of my presets is the 70's channel – some great songs back then – and on weekends, they play rebroadcasts of “America’s Top 40 with Casey Kasem.” This week, 40 years ago, the #1 song was “If I Can’t Have You” by Yvonne Elliman off the Saturday Night Fever soundtrack.² Ok, it was the disco era, so maybe there weren’t so many great songs back then. The point of course is this: a #1 song this week often is soon forgotten.

Paul was telling the church at Corinth that when all the things in which you and I glory have passed away – be it music or entertainment or clothing styles, love will still stand. The one unconquerable thing is love.

But it has to be the right love. You heard me: the right love, because you and I throw around this word “love” for all kinds of things. We’re not like the Greeks who had different words to describe love.

Look back again to page 5 in your bulletin. I’ve talked about the 3 main words for love in Greek, but today I want to dive deeper into those words with this question in mind: how do we love God? Jesus said it was the most important commandment, most important thing to do, to love God with all of your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.³ How do we love God?

Do you remember the three Greek words we have been talking about? Well, let’s fill out this chart.⁴

	Eros	Phileo	Agape
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Here’s what each of those translate into English:

	Eros	Phileo	Agape
English	Lust	Love for others	Divine Love

Let’s look at what each really means.

Eros means, “Love for what I see and what I can get.” Lust looks at something or someone, sees it as pleasurable and for what it can get, and calls that love. Whether it is a pretty woman or a fancy car or a lovely dress, we call those things “love” when we should really call them Eros or lust.

On the other hand, Phileo means, “Love for fellow human beings and God’s creation.” Philadelphia is called the “City of Brotherly Love” from the words Delphia

² Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Billboard_Hot_100_number-one_singles_of_1978

³ See Mark 12:28-29

⁴ Full chart

	Eros	Phileo	Agape
English	Lust	Love for others	Divine Love
Meaning	Love for what I see and what I can get	Love for fellow human beings and God’s creation	Love that is universal, unconditional, and transcends circumstances
_____ love for God and others	Loves God only for what He gives you	Loves God for who He is	Loves God and others as God loves me

which means city and Phileo which means brotherly, or a more modern translation, love for your fellow human beings, and I will add, God's creation. This is a wonderful kind of love. It is love and affection bent towards our natural tastes and preferences. It embodies culture and beliefs. It's about the friendship you feel towards people like you, with the same interests, social graces, and style. In the Scriptures, this kind of friendship love is used to describe many relationships. Jesus felt this kind of love for His disciples, parents felt it about their children and children to their parents. This is not a shallow love, but rich in emotion and feeling, like when your heart beams towards your child when they do something wonderful.

Finally, we have Agape love. Of course, Agape is the highest love because it is divine love. It is "Love that is universal, unconditional, and transcends circumstances." Agape is a sacrificial kind of love. The Thayer Lexicon describes Agape beautifully when it says "to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above all other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it."⁵ In a way it is as idealistic as Eros, in that it is a crazy love that will not let go. Agape loves, usually at cost to the bearer. Agape puts the beloved first and sacrifices pride, self-interest and possessions for the sake of that beloved. This is the love that God has for us which inspired Him to sacrifice His son and for His son to obey and sacrifice Himself. It is the kind of love we are commanded to have for one another. It is a love of supreme greatness.

The question I want to leave with you today: what kind of love do you have for God and others? I'm serious about this, because we are supposed to love God, but what kind of love do you have for God.

- An Eros kind of love that loves God only for what He gives you. I love God for only what He does for me, when He does it for me. The rest of the time, I live for myself, on my own terms, and directed by my own will. This is not the kind of love John describes here. So, do you have only Eros love for God only for what He gives you?
- Or do you have a Phileo kind of love for God that loves God for who He is? Yes, this is a great and wonderful love. "I love you God, for You are the Creator and Sustainer of life. You know my needs even before I ask. You care for me and my family. So I will do things for You; I will serve You and Your causes." This is a great love.
- But it is not Agape love that loves God and others as God loves me; the kind of sacrificial love of Jesus, the kind of love found in 1 John 4. Do you have the kind of love for God and for others that will give and sacrifice and not count the cost; the kind of love that will never let go? The kind of love God loves you?

Ephesians 5:1 says,

*Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.*⁶

Imitate God and His love, and love God and others as God loves us.

Seek first the high love Agape; that sacrifices, forgives and believes; the love of Christ, freely given to those who ask and receive. Drink deeply of the Father's love for you, of this eternal and perfect love.

This is the kind of love that will last.

⁵ Lexicon of the New Testament, αγαπη

⁶ Ephesians 5:1 (NIV)