

6. Is the love discussed here an action or a feeling?

What does this tell you about love?

7. In your life when has “love” held too much fear?

When has God’s love cast out fear?

8. Why is it so hard for us to love like God loves (unconditionally)?

1 John 4:7-21

God's Love and Ours

7Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son^[b] into the world that we might live through him. 10This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for^[c] our sins. 11Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

13We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 17In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

19We love because he first loved us. 20If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Leader Notes:

We find that we lack not only the wisdom to love well, but also the courage to love faithfully when it is hard, costly, or lonely to do so...Our loves are challenged and frequently compromised by a kind of selfishness...God does not share our limitations or our ignorance and is not driven either towards love or away from it by any fear or lack. Knowing us completely and needing nothing from us, God loves us without illusions and without deception, and entirely for our own sake. Thus only God's love is perfectly secure, unconditional in a full and unqualified sense.

A variety of Hebrew words are used to name God's loyalty, compassion and commitment towards the creatures God has made.

"Hesed" a Hebrew word commonly used for God's love towards people. It connotes love that moves one to rescue. Often translated as "steadfast love", "loving kindness" or "saving mercy".

Types of Love

Storge – Greek word for affection, the basic, almost instinctive love for those closest to us.

Philia – The love of friendship

Eros – Romantic love

Agape – love of neighbor

1 Corinthians 13

Love

1If I speak in the tongues^[a] of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames,^[b] but have not love, I gain nothing.

4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8Love 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. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.