

LOVE

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and give himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25).

While the English language has one word for love, the Greeks had at least four. The word translated “love” in our text is “agapao”. The following list provides a brief insight into how wide and long, how high and deep, love really is (Eph. 3:14 - 19)..

- Agapeo - unconditional and selfless love that describes the nature of God **“This is how we know what love is; Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1 Jn. 3:16).**
- Phileo - love between friends. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him (Jn. 21:15 - 17), The first two times Jesus used “agapeo” and the third time “phileo”. The inference is, Peter, do you even love me as a friend?
- Storge - love of family.
- Eros - Sexual love.

All four words are experienced within the framework of marriage. No wonder marriage is so important to God. Jesus said it like this: **“Haven’t you read, . . . that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, ‘for this cause a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one, Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matt. 19:4 - 6).**

The fact that “in the beginning” God made male and female was not an accident. God deliberately designed the man to need the woman, and the women to need the man. The woman originally came from the man and afterward men came from women (1 Cor. 11:11, 12). Understanding the mystery of marriage assumes a special significance because it actually provides insight into the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32). Not understanding marriage therefore impedes our understanding of Christ and salvation.

“In the beginning” God made one woman for one man for one lifetime. This is the ideal relationship toward which all of us should strive. As Adam and Eve had children new families were formed. Children would leave the loyalty to their parents and cleave to one another in the sacred bonds of matrimony. Their love for one another would create a new family. The institution of marriage was given by God and is the oldest institution on the face of the earth.

Because sin entered into the world, the bonds of holy matrimony are sometimes broken, but “from the beginning” it was not so. The selfless love of God and His desire to preserve the sanctity of marriage is beautifully illustrated by the prophet Hosea. Hosea was a prophet to the sinful Northern Kingdom during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash (Hos. 1:1). When Hosea’s wife was unfaithful and became a harlot, God commanded him to buy her back from her wayward life (Hos. 3:1). Hosea obeyed God and bought back his wayward wife for 15 pieces of silver and an homer and a half of barley. This is precisely the kind of love that Jesus has for us, and also the kind of love that husbands are to have for their wives.

This profound love, as you know, is the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit. Man cannot produce fruit! The artificial fruit that man can make has no fragrance and is incapable of reproduction. Only God can produce real fruit. Thus the depth of love we need can only come from God.

Jesus reminds us that a grain of wheat must die to experience new life (Jn. 12:24). So also the sincere disciple of Jesus must take up a cross and crucify self in order to know that love that passes knowledge and be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:14 - 19). Therefore: **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and give himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25).**