

The Four Loves

The Four Loves is a book by C. S. Lewis which explores the nature of love only from a Christian perspective (without regard to other religions) through thought-experiments and examples from literature. The content of the examination is prefaced by Lewis' admission that he initially mistook St. John's words "*God is Love*" for a simple inroads to his topic. By distinguishing need-love (such as the love of a child for its mother) from gift-love (epitomized by God's love for humanity), Lewis happens upon the contemplative that the natures of even these basic categorizations of love are more complicated than they, at first, seem. As a result, he formulates the foundation of his topic ("the highest does not stand without the lowest") by exploring the nature of pleasure, and then divides love into four categories, based in part on the four Greek words for *love*: affection, friendship, eros, and charity. It must be noted, states Lewis, that just as Lucifer—a former archangel—perverted himself by pride and fell into depravity, so too can love—commonly held to be the arch-emotion—become corrupt by presuming itself to be what it is not ("love begins to be a demon the moment he begins to be a god").

The Four Loves; The first three (Affection, Friendship, Eros) can be seen as the natural, or "creation" loves.

The fourth love, Charity, or... Agape/Godly love, is the love of God and holds its proper place as the overseeing, balancing, Love over the first three loves. It takes preeminence and thereby brings the first three loves to their fullest expression.

Storge – Affection

Affection (storge, *στοργή*) is fondness through familiarity, especially between family members or people who have otherwise found themselves together by chance. It is described as the most natural, emotive, and widely diffused of loves: natural in that it is present without coercion; emotive because it is the result of fondness due to familiarity; and most widely diffused because it pays the least attention to those characteristics deemed "valuable" or worthy of love and, as a result, is able to transcend most discriminating factors. Ironically, its strength, however, is what makes it vulnerable. Affection has the appearance of being "built-in" or "ready-made", says Lewis, and as a result people come to expect, even to demand, its presence—irrespective of their behavior and its natural consequences. "It teaches us first to notice, then to endure, then to smile at, then to enjoy and finally to appreciate the people who just 'happen to be there'. This range of people is odder than you would have believed and worth more than you would have guessed."

Of all the loves Affection is the easiest to give as it requires only the continued presence of the person or object over time. We can have Affection for those with whom, over the years, we still do not agree and is broadest in scope as it attaches itself as a bond between the young, old, fair, homely, rich, poor, intelligent and simple. When Affection is in balance it seeks the independence of the person for whom the affection is. It does not seek reliance, but rather "space", or room, for differences to reside and cooperate in a cohesive, peaceful, cooperative manner. When Affection is out of balance it seeks to promote and enslave the recipients need for being given that which they may not need. (favors, attention, supervision, nosiness, smothering, etc.) This may be defined as "selfish giving" since the unbalanced giver of affection is not really concerned with providing a person's need towards independence, but rather to maintain themselves in a position of "giver" over the "recipient". Seeks to subordinate others by guilt or intimidation so as to maintain a provider position. The need to be needed has thus gone out of balance.

Affection is kept in balance when there is Reasoning, Justice and Decency. Reasoning... to know when you are effecting good or bad towards others. Justice... to give and receive somewhat equally. Decency... to practice affection with patience, self-denial, humility, and dependence on another, higher lover. (Agape love.) Affection (and/or Friendship, Eros love) will go bad on us if we apply them alone without the application of that Godly love which provides the base and fills the holes that the more natural loves fall short in.

Philia – Friendship

Friendship (philia, *φιλία*) is a strong bond existing between people who share a common interest or activity. Lewis explicitly says that his definition of friendship is narrower than mere companionship: friendship in his sense only exists if there is something for the friendship to be "about". He calls Companionship or Clubbability a matrix for friendship, as friendship can rise in the context of both.

Friendship is the least *natural* of loves, states Lewis; i.e., it is not biologically necessary to progeny like either affection (e.g., rearing a child), eros (e.g., creating a child), or charity (e.g., providing for a child). It has the least association with impulse or emotion. In spite of these characteristics, it was the belief of the ancients, (and Lewis himself), that it was the most admirable of loves because it looked not at the beloved (like eros), but towards that "about"—that thing because of which the relationship was formed. This freed the participants in this friendship from self-consciousness.

Differences between Friends and Lovers;

- Lovers... often speak of their love for each other to one another. Friends... rarely speak of the friendship to one another, instead tend to accept it as a "given" and operate in it when together.
- Lovers... often speak both physically and in mental perception face-to-face, absorbed in each other. Friends... side-by-side, absorbed in some common interest, goal or philosophy.
- Eros love is (healthily) between two, and only two. Friendship can increase in its enjoyment by the addition of two, three or more so long as the interest, goal or philosophy is somewhat the same as a common bond.

Friendship is born from "companionship", the discovery of common interest between acquaintances. Companionship/acquaintances are not necessarily Friendships. Lovers seek for privacy. Friends pull from the herd in becoming friends but would appreciate a 3rd, 4th or 5th party on the same terms. Unity among friends is inward, unity among companions/acquaintances is outward.

Two friends unite in a goal forward. One who wants a friend and only a friend, without a common goal for growth, will be frustrated. Friendship is about something specific. Friendship between two of the opposite sex will often lead to Eros love, unless there is no attraction or Eros love is already promised by one or both elsewhere. (marriage, engagement or courtship already in progress) Friendship does not demand services, but will accept or perform them on an accidental or as-needed basis with a desire to return to the subject of unity that drew them together. "Don't mention it.", is heard among friends because we'd just as soon not have needing or giving a part of the friendship.

Friendship makes use of information only as it is needed, casually. Friendship does not have prerequisites of attraction, class, marital status, age, etc. Like sovereign princes gathered together, it is mutually respectful and courteous. Where Eros love has bodily nakedness/openness, Friendship bares open naked personalities. You know your lover by looking into their eyes and heart. You know your friends by reading, arguing, praying, playing, speaking, etc. with them. Friendship humbles us in that we are so fortunate to have it. It tends to make good men better and bad men worse. (mutual focus and growth on the common element.) Pride and exclusiveness of others to the extreme are the greatest danger to any healthy friendship.

Eros – Romance

Eros (ἔρως) is love in the sense of 'being in love'. This is distinct from sexuality, which Lewis calls Venus, although he does spend time discussing sexual activity and its spiritual significance in both a pagan and a Christian sense. He identifies eros as indifferent. This is good because it promotes appreciation of the beloved regardless of any pleasure that can be obtained from them. It can be bad, however, because this blind devotion has been at the root of many of history's most abominable tragedies. In keeping with his warning that "love begins to be a demon the moment [it] begins to be a god", he warns against the danger of elevating eros to the status of a god.

Eros love includes sexuality, but sexuality is NOT, in itself, Eros love.

Sexual desire, without Eros love, wants only sex. Eros wants, during sex, the intimacy of the beloved. A lustful man does not "want a woman"; a woman is merely to him a necessary apparatus to fulfill his desires. It is his own fulfillment, selfishness, that he seeks... not a woman. Eros makes a man want, not a woman, but one particular woman. Sex that is too flippant and comical can set up a couple for resentments and self-pities. Sex that is too serious is deprived of the romp and fun that is essential to a healthy enjoyment of sex. Eros love moves between serious episodes of romance and lighthearted escapades of play. It is not all one or the other, but both. As Christ loves the Church... men are to love their wives. To give their lives. The bride has all the beauty which the bridegroom sees in her. He does not find, but makes her lovely.

Eros love is a shadow of, or even a hands-on preparatory exercise in, Agape love. But it is not and cannot deliver of itself the selfless type of love found in Agape, Godly love. It is God's Spirit living and working within us which makes Agape love possible in our lives. Those who expect Eros love to do the work of Agape love will, upon unfulfilled expectation, throw the blame to their partners when consequences become evident. By humility, charity and grace we turn our hearts to God as our source and support to be able to give our partner Agape love along with Eros love.

Agape – Charity

Charity (agapē, ἀγάπη) is an unconditional love directed towards one's neighbor which is not dependent on any lovable qualities that the object of love possesses. Agape is the love that brings forth caring regardless of circumstance. Lewis recognizes this as the greatest of loves, and sees it as a specifically Christian virtue. The chapter on the subject focuses on the need of subordinating the natural loves to the love of God, who is full of charitable love. Lewis states that "He is so full, in fact, that it overflows, and He can't help but love us." Lewis metaphorically compares love with a garden, charity with the gardening utensils, the lover as the gardener, and God as the elements of nature. God's love and guidance act on our natural love (that cannot remain what it is by itself) as the sun and rain act on a garden: without either, the object (metaphorically the garden; realistically love itself) would cease to be beautiful or worthy. Lewis warns that those who exhibit charity must constantly check themselves that they do not flaunt—and thereby warp—this love ("But when you give to someone, don't tell your left hand what your right hand is doing."—Matthew 6:3), which is its potential threat.

Affection, Friendship and Eros find their fullness of glory only when submitted to Charity. "This does not make them bad, for being less. A garden is a good thing but will only be different from a wilderness if it is pruned, mowed and weeded. Even so, these loves need the care of Charity love in order to be kept in their proper perspective, produce good fruit and remain sweet. "As a man and a garden will not survive without rain and sunshine, even these loves can only grow well, if at all, in a man's heart when God's Charitable, selfless love is allowed to enter, bless, and work the garden's promise and the gardener's toil into a fruitful enterprise.

"Love's proper place is to God himself. To love at all involves risk of heartache, but far better this than to lock up our hearts in a coffin where they grow cold and hard, irredeemable. We trust it is God's wisdom to prune, and not to destroy, that which He planted in our hearts and therefore we embrace the learning of His love."

"If any man come after me and hate not his father and mother and wife and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." To hate, in this sense, is to set ourselves against anything, any other love even, that would try to position itself higher than God's type of love or love for God. To obey God, rather than our nearest and dearest friends, family or lover may indeed be perceived by them as hateful. When two agree, as in man and wife, to place Charity above the other loves then they need not oppose each other's obedience to God's love. Divine love, Charity, desires what is best for the beloved. God loves us who are unlovable, not attractive to God in the least, it was He who first loved us.

In Eros, to love man or woman more, or disproportionately, than God will require surrender before the true fullness of Eros can be realized. We need not throw away silver to make room for gold... we need merely to acknowledge the gold as far superior to the silver and hold it over anything else. In even the smallest daily acts (a game, a joke, a chat, a dinner...) we can exercise either the love that is in need or the love that gives. Same for Eros love. Give and it will be given to you.

"To him that has more shall be given, to him that has not, even what little he has shall be taken from him."

The first 3 loves are capable among men to some degree. Charity is purely of God. "The natural loves are called to become perfect Charity and also perfect natural loves. As God becomes man, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God, so here; Charity does not dwindle into merely natural love; but natural love is taken up into, made the tuned and obedient instrument of, Love Himself."

