

# What is Love?

There are many things written saying that God is Love. But what does that mean? In “The Four Loves,” C.S. Lewis explores the different ways in which people love one another. He also explains how love can be perverted, “love begins to be a demon the moment he begins to be a god,” and how love relates to God.

**Storge** – Affection, the love one has for family and those who are naturally close to them. It is said to be “built-in” or “ready-made” and those with such a relationship tend to expect storge unconditionally, without regard to their own actions.

- How do we show affection for our family?
- What do we do with our families that we don’t do other places?
- Do you think this love is different than any other feeling? Is this love a feeling?

**Philia** – Friendship, the love that we choose to give to close companions by virtue of common ground. There is no biological reason for philia, and yet love of this type is generally the least self-conscious and is able to focus on the common ground rather than on the individuals.

- How did you and your best friend become best friends? What does that say about friendship?
- What are the characteristics of your friendships that differ from your relationship to your family?
- Read John 15:11–15. What does Jesus tell us about the importance of friendship? Why do you think that is?

**Eros** – Romantic love, the love between a man and a woman which is given freely. It is said to be indifferent, that both parties love each other regardless of any pain or pleasure the other gives them. It is also the easiest love to abuse because of the strong feelings associated with such a personal love.

- Does romantic love require marriage? A sexual relationship? Can eros exist apart from other loves?
- What characteristics are present in Eros that is not part of any other love?
- How does God work in romantic love?

**Agape** – Charity, God love, it is the love that is unconditionally shared with us. There is very little that must be done on our part; we must only accept and realize God’s infinite love for us. The other three loves must be subservient to agape. Also, we can share this love with our neighbor by loving them regardless of any hindrance.

- How does God require us to show charity?
- In what ways can we make philia, storge, and eros serve agape?
- Can there be true unconditional love?



- Can you think of a relationship that doesn’t fit a category? Or that fits multiple categories?
- Can you think of types of love that fit none of these categories?
- What are some ways that love is abused in today’s society?
- What are some ways that we can express God’s love?
- Can you propose some ways we can better express the word “love”?
- If someone asked you what you learned tonight, what would be your answer?
- St. Augustine distinguishes between *uti* or “use” and *frui* “enjoyment” meaning the

difference between using a thing as a means to some other end and using a thing, enjoying it, for an end in and of itself. Are these types of love or not? Is it okay to use a thing for some other end?