



Lively Stones | PETER 2:5

Holding forth the word of life

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Editorial

Many people believe that love transcends time and age. Some say that with love, they can survive on water and air. Is this love? Some of us understand that love is not the mushy "I love you". Love is also not what we watch on TV, read in novels and hear in songs. Yes, love involves commitment, sacrifice and acceptance—it takes hard work. But there is more to it.

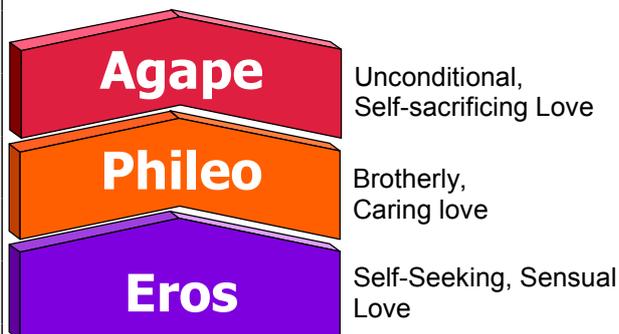
We believe in a God whose attributes include love. So, let us examine love as taught in the Bible.

We hope that this article by Dn Roger Lim will encourage us to exhibit love that is intended by to one another.

Editorial team

Godly Love vs Worldly Love

The topic for this article centres around a very familiar word – **LOVE**. The word Love is from Old English *lufu*, connected with Sanskrit *lubh*, 'to desire' and Latin *lubere*, 'to please' (<http://www.explorelove.co.uk>). Hence, we normally associate the idea of love to passion and romantic love, of which the highlight is seen in the yearly Valentine's Day celebration. This modern definition of love leads us to a self-seeking perspective of love, which is not very helpful in understanding the deeper essence of it. When we turn to the ancient Greek language, which is both a language of the Bible and philosophy, we see three different expressions for love, giving us a more definitive and deeper understanding on this topic.



God's love for mankind was the foremost Agape Love whereby Christ's sacrificial love was demonstrated by His condescension to earth and crucifixion at the Cross. Philadelphia, a city in USA, was named to depict the idea of brotherly love. Eros gave the erotic and sensual perspective of love, and is commonly associated with Cupid, the Roman god of erotic love.

So which type of love should a Christian exhibit in his or her daily walk? The answer is found in Mt 11:29, whereby Christ said, "Learn of Me". Our source of authority is the Word of the Living God. God is a jealous God, His great love for us demands a devotion in godly fear and love. The Bible gives us many illustrations and examples for our admonishment against love for the things of the world.

Worldly Love

The Lord taught us to remember Lot's wife (Lk 17:32) because she was punished for her secret love for Sodom and Gomorrah, indicating her worldly inclinations and endorsement of sinful lifestyles. We were also warned of having love for an epicurean lifestyle filled with partying, entertainment and self-gratification (Lk 21:34). The Christian's life is not consisted in material abundance or covetousness (Lk 12:15), but peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Ro 14:17). Worldly love is also seen in seeking after fame and glory, which the Lord rebuked the Jews for praying in public for recognition and visibility (Mt 6:5). In the Old Testament Book of Judges, we learn that sensual love and fleshly desires led to the downfall of Samson, to which Paul warned that sexual uncleanness is an act of the godless who do not know God, and believers who reject the teaching of purity is in fact rejecting God (1Thess 4:4-8).

Godly Love

For a Christian, our first love should be directed towards God. The Lord told us in Mk 12:42 giving of the poor widow's mites were a

Godly Love vs Worldly Love

demonstration of a self-emptying love, sacrificing all her earthly possession in devotion to the Lord. Jude 21 told us to keep ourselves in the love of God, which we need to upkeep lest we turn lukewarm like the Laodicean Church (Rev 3:14). Love for God will translate to action in love for God's kingdom. Nehemiah wept over the state of Jerusalem (Neh1:4), indicating his personal love and passion for the affairs of God's kingdom. The author of Hymn 262 "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord!", Timothy Dwight (maternal grandson of evangelist Jonathon Edwards), exhorted us through the lyrics to pay attention to the general development of Christendom and to love the Church our blest Redeemer has saved! Love for God's kingdom will also translate to love for God's people. Gal 6:10 gave the principle of corporate help in the church. Outreach to the unbelievers is a reflection of our love for mankind (Gal 5:14) so that they might hear the gospel and enter into the fold of the Lord (Jn 10:16).



Glorifying Love

How to express love that is glorifying? WSC Qn1 taught us the short yet profound instruction of life – we must always love in the Lord so as to glorify God. The love for another person, activity, hobby, possession must ultimately benefit our spiritual life and bring glory to God.

Courtship – The relationship should not be developed in the worldly romanticized way of gift-exchange, talking about and doing sweet-nothings. First, love the person as a brother or sister-in-Christ. You should not be attracted by a lovely face, but by a godly heart. Only when you have evaluated that

he or she is a godly Christian worthy of two of you being together, then you can move on to a deeper relationship, in the pace as the Lord leads. Remember not to use *eros* love, but *phileo* and *agape* love for God's glory.

Leisure and entertainment - Eccl 2:24 and 3:13 say that pleasure of life is given from the hand of God. With this understanding, the love for life cannot overtake the love for God. For students, make sure we are selective in deciding on CCA such that the skills and knowledge is something that will benefit us in self-development and that can be used to serve God and glorify Him! Likewise for young adults, we should know that leisure activities and entertainment are not for us to satisfy the flesh, let our guard down along with our hair, lose all form of godly constraints, get wild and sin against God in the process. God is a God of order and decency (1Cor 14:40). I once heard that a Christian family had to rush off after church service to enjoy the newly joined country club. Since it was an expensive investment, the family had to seize every opportunity to use the facilities to the fullest. Needless to say, their pre-occupation in church every Sunday is to make sure they get out of church in the earliest opportunity! Our life should be enjoyed in a biblical, God-pleasing way that will benefit our body and soul, as well as encourage others in the faith.

Closing Remarks

So is there a way to balance worldly love with godly love? I would take the view that it is an exclusive love for God, any other form is wrong. In Mt 6:24, we learn that we cannot serve God and mammon. No balancing between loves but I recommend a consecrated love for God. But as sinners saved by grace, we cannot claim to be sinless perfect. We do have secret love and secret faults (Ps 19:12). Then we should have the impetus to reduce the amount of worldly love and increase godly love, which is part of our Christian journey of sanctification. A compelling love to be like Christ will propel us in the Christian growth towards holiness, perfecting it in the fear of God, without which no man shall see the Lord (2Cor 7:1, Heb 12:14). Amen.

Announcements

- Next Sunday, 26 Feb 2006, will be the Promotion Sunday for the Sunday School's Primary Department.

- The Editorial team welcomes contribution from the congregation. Please send contributions to kohjulia@starhub.net.sg. The editorial team reserves the right to edit any articles to be