

Love has so many meanings, yet we often only hear and speak of love within a romantic context. We see this “rose-colored” view of love all around us—littered throughout the media, our culture, and in surrounding relationships. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with romantic love, we often allow it to limit how we view, receive, and practice love in our own lives. When we limit the giving and receiving of love to romantic relationships, we miss precious opportunities to partake in love throughout the entirety of our lives. We need to redefine our view of love.

What is *Love*?

The Bible paints a much fuller picture of love. Love encompasses more than just emotional affection, and it is evident in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8:

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.

These verses highlight that love contains more—a whole lot more—than what we usually assign to it. Just reading this view of love can be overwhelming, yet Jesus goes even further and calls us to love in this way. In Matthew 22:36-39, Jesus reveals the two greatest commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Many of us have difficulty loving ourselves, much less loving God and others. How can we give and receive love of this high measure?

What it means to receive *Love*

There is a simple yet vital truth in realizing we are not capable of giving love of this measure. The truth is that God is the source of love. In fact, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). Nowhere has God’s love been more evident or bountiful than in Jesus and “neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is **in** Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). Since God is love, and we are not, we need to receive love from Him. We need to acknowledge that He is the only one that is capable of giving the fullness of love.

What it means to give *Love*

As we constantly receive this love from God, we can then turn and give it to others from a place of abundance. We no longer have to feel inadequate or incapable of giving the love that God requires of us because God is love. Whereas our attempts to love often leave us tired, discouraged, and empty, His source never runs dry.

As we enter in the holiday season, let’s remember to receive his abundant love and to allow that to overflow into the lives of those around us.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

1 John 3:1