

Overview of C.S. Lewis's classic book *The Four Loves*

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), an atheist until age 30, was one of the intellectual giants of the twentieth century and among the most influential Christian writers of his day. He wrote such celebrated books as *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In *The Four Loves*, a wise and warmly personal book, Lewis provides a candid, profound reflection on both the virtues and failings of human loving.

His exploration of the theme of love opens with the distinction between two different kinds of love: "Need-love," such as the love of a child for its mother, as distinguished from "Gift-love," epitomized by God's love for humanity. Lewis provides insights into these as well as other variations of human love, such as love of country, love of home, and "Appreciative-love," when special attention is offered to another of value. From this foundation, love is considered from four categories, based in part from the four Greek words for love. While these can each be understood uniquely, they are actually intimately connected – *"the highest does not stand without the lowest."* These four loves are:

1. Affection [storge] (στοργή): The fondness through familiarity, especially between family members or people who have otherwise found themselves together. This kind of love is about being comfortable with another person or group of people. It is the most natural, emotive, and widely diffused of loves. These factors lend it strength, but also make it vulnerable, for affection has the appearance of being "built-in" or "ready-made," and as a result people come to expect, even to demand, its presence, irrespective of their own behaviour. This love can work for ill as well as for good.

2. Friendship [philia] (φιλία): The love between genuine friends. Friendship arises out of companionship when two or more people discover they have common interests and an inward connection that others do not share. This love is often spontaneously discovered when the two realize that they are sharing a different, eminently spiritual journey. While lovers are pictured face to face, friends are side by side, their eyes looking forward.

3. Romance [eros] (ἔρως): The sense of "being in love." Sexuality is part of Eros but is distinct from it and can operate without it. Eros wonderfully transforms what is essentially a desire for pleasure into longing for genuine emotional connection with another person, desiring intimacy with another who is the focus of one's attention. Eros is about wanting another person whom is known as "beloved."

4. Charity [agape] (ἀγάπη): Love that brings forth care regardless of circumstance. The natural, human loves are not self-sufficient - their glory lies within the greater love of Agape, which is the greatest of all the loves. God is love, and therefore in Him there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. While God, as Creator, has implanted in people the first three loves, Agape is God's own Gift-love and comes by pure grace. The other three natural loves are thus subordinate to this Agape love of God, which is characterized by full, charitable, self-giving love. Because of God's love for humanity, he has bestowed a supernatural Need-love for Himself as well as a Need-love of one another. Our very being is made to seek and abide in Agape love.

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January 22, 2012

Longing for Affection

Hear [shema], O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love [ahav] the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Storge [στοργή] is the Greek word for _____ - cherishing family or kin, such as a parent's love for a child.

"In my experience it is Affection that creates this taste [for humanity] teaching us first to notice, then to endure, then to smile at, then to enjoy, and finally to appreciate, the people who 'happen to be there.' Made for us? Thank God, no. They are themselves, odder than you could have believed and worth far more than we guessed."

C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

Love [agape] must be sincere ... Love [philadelphia] one another with kindly affection [philostorge]. Honor one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:9-10

• _____ your family

• _____ intimacy

• Honour _____

• _____ God

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