

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,” epitomised 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 realise 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 characterised 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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Created for Connection

Philia [φιλία] is the Greek word for love between _____.

“Companionship is between people who are doing something together – hunting, studying, painting or what you will. Friends will still be doing something together, but something more inward, less widely shared and less easily defined; still hunters, but of some immaterial quarry; still collaborating, but in some work the world does not, or not yet, take account of; still travelling companions, but on a different kind of journey.”
C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

1. Philia love is _____ with _____.

A friend loves at all times; and a brother is born of adversity. Proverbs 17:17

Jonathan became one in spirit with David ... And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 1 Samuel 18:1-3

Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.” Ruth 1:16

2. Philia love is _____ with _____.

Greater love [agape] has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends [philos]. You are my friends if you do what I command... I have called you friends for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you... This is my command: Love each other. John 15:13-17

3. Philia love is _____ with _____.

Love [agape] must be sincere ... Love [philadelphia] one another with kindly affection [philostorge]. Honour one another above yourselves. Romans 12:9-10

4. Philia love is _____ with _____.

Make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control, and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness [philadelphia], and to brotherly kindness, love [agape]. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-7

You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship [philia] with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend [philos] of the world becomes an enemy of God. James 4:4

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