

"I know what love is" 5-year-old Owen said, "Love is when someone loves someone else...and then they whack each other."

One little boy said, "Ewww! Love? Ew."

Seven-year-old Vince said that love is "The warm feeling when someone hugs you."

"Love is what happens when you really really like someone, and you want to spend all day with them and nobody else. Except for maybe your family and your friends because you love them too." Matty, 9

Smart little 7-year-old Lee said "You tell me! You're old."

Blogger [Rachel Cameron](#) wrote on February 4, 2019 –

Love is a difficult concept to describe, even for adults. So how would my preschooler and two school-aged kids define it?

I started saying "I love you" to my kids from the moment they were born. Maybe even before that.

That's one thing, I bet, most parents share in common.

It wasn't long (after they could talk) that my kiddos started saying it back. In our household, we use the "L" word a lot. That one simple phrase often starts and ends each day.

But love is actually a difficult concept to describe, even for adults.

The dictionary defines it as, "An intense feeling of deep affection." I'm not sure I would have landed on that exactly, but I get it.

I was curious how my three young sons feel about the "L" word. What does it mean to them? What does "love" conjure up for a little three-year-old and an 8 or 10-year-old? So I asked them. Here's what they said.

The 10-year-old

My eldest is mature beyond his years and surprisingly wise, so I thought I'd start with him. "What does the word 'love' mean to you?" I asked.

"I dunno," he replied, barely looking up from his iPad. (Maybe he's more of a typical 10-year-old than I thought.)

I removed the distraction and told him to think about it for a minute. I asked him to describe how he feels towards the people he loves and, in turn, how they make him feel.

"It's for people that you like a lot," he said. "They make you feel safe and secure and warm. Like you want to hug them."

Bravo, I thought. That makes perfect sense to me. He characterized his feelings of love using adjectives that show how those who care for him fulfill his needs. He feels safe, secure, warm. Truly heartwarming.

The eight-year-old

My middle son is what I would describe as a typical kid. He's happy-go-lucky, kind, curious—and a little cheeky.

When I asked him what love means to him, he was able to answer pretty quickly: "Like when you miss someone when they go away."

That's also perfect, I thought. He characterized his feelings of love by the absence of someone.

Perhaps unable to describe it with adjectives like his older brother did, he captured the feeling just as well. You know you love someone if you miss them when they go away. Bingo.

The three-year-old

Our youngest son, who is three but almost four, is funny, bright, daring and extremely squishable. He was a little tougher to pin down for an answer since he is so young. And what was I expecting? Not much really.

"What does the word love mean?" I asked him. He looked at me like I had two heads. So I took a little extra time to describe what I meant. When he did answer, it was just one word repeated over and over again:

"Mommy, mommy, mommy, mommy..."

"When you think about how love makes you feel, you think of me?" I asked. He nodded with a big smile on his face. He *is* my little sidekick, so this definitely made sense. For my littlest one, feelings of love are obviously so engrained with people themselves that he can't, at this age, separate the two. And of course, I loved how his definition made me feel.

The author says 'This exercise was really fun and it helped me understand my kids and our bond a little better. As they grow and experience being 'in love' and the (likely) heartbreak that goes along with it, their definition of love will undoubtedly change, but for now I appreciate their unspoiled and utterly honest kid views.

What do you think your kids, grandkids, great grands would say? Maybe you should ask them. Their answers might surprise you and will probably also fill your heart.

A little boy was punished by his father. Later he knelt by his bed to say his prayers and ended with the usual blessings for all the family but one. Then he turned to his father and said, "I suppose you noticed you weren't in my prayer."

A Mother tells the following story about her 3-year-old daughter.

"The scenario is that I've had a long-hard-rotten day and it's bedtime for her.

I get myself through the story, song, drink of water and back rub - the usual bedtime routine.

I say, "You know Abigail, I could sure use a big hug." And so she graces me with this wondrous SUPER HUG (as we call them).

I'm telling her that was wonderful; the exact best hug that I needed, and I ask if she has any more.

Very seriously she says, "I have more Mom, I get them from my heart."

I say, "What?" She says, "I have hugs in my heart."

I ask, "Well, could I have another one? I could sure use another if you have enough."

She says, "Sure you can, I can always grow more in my heart."

These stories illustrate the sincerity of children. In their innocence, they have a way of surprising us grown-ups with a wisdom that goes far beyond their years.

Love is one of those words that covers more "things" than just a feeling between people. So far, we have talked mostly about the love between people, between family, between friends and maybe even future love interests, but the word love also describes feelings about all sorts of things.

We also have the love of things.

Some might say they love their car, the get-up-and go, the color, the way it handles.

In fact I might be in this category. My car is 11 years old, has some dings in it, probably doesn't have the get-up-and-go it did when it was new, but I can say I love my car.

There are foods you might say you love. This time of the year it is easy to identify those fresh from the garden fruits and vegetables that are oh so good.

Perhaps you might say you love corn on the cob or fresh picked tomatoes, or maybe you love the refrigerator pickles you made from the fresh cucumbers.

How about music, what type of music would you say you love? Maybe you love rock-n-roll, or jazz, or hip hop or... well you get the idea. We have many things in life we say we love.

In his letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul describes what sincere love looks like not only within the faith community, but in the world at large.

I have read that good distance runners don't just play general messages in their minds like "Relax!" or "Stay loose!" while running?

Instead, good runners play very specific messages over and over in their minds, messages like "Let lower lip sag!" or "Feel how loose my fingers are right now!"

These specific messages help their whole body to relax and stay loose.

It is the same with Paul's ideas for genuine Christ-like love in Romans 12.

He is giving us very specific ideas for true love.

For example, he says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep", or "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all".

Another very specific idea for love is found in the quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22 to feed and give something to drink to hungry and thirsty enemies.

Of course, this does not endorse playing along with abusive strategies that arise in some dysfunctional relationships.

It means to think about and to help meet others' genuine needs, including the needs of people who do not like us.

But what's the point of the result; later in Romans 12:20 we read "By doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads".

Scholars of this text have different opinions regarding whether this means that by doing good to an enemy you will increase God's judgment on the person or whether it means that by doing good you will help the person repent.

The latter is much more likely, since it fits with the deep theme in this immediate section that we are not to have any part in repaying evil in our personal relationships and it fits with the overarching theme that love is to be genuine.

My love for an enemy isn't genuine if I am motivated by the idea that any kindness shown increases God's punishment on the person!

Genuine love is the primary theme in this section of Romans but there is also a theme of good and evil that operates throughout this text.

Notice how "hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good" follows immediately after the opening title of "Let love be genuine."

Then the good and evil theme is again mentioned at the end of the text: "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good".

This helps us see that genuine love is not just being nice to people.

Genuine love has a moral orientation toward the good.

When we show love toward someone, we are moving them toward God's goodness.

To love someone is not simply to cater to specific likes and dislikes of that person.

It is rather to act toward them in ways that help them experience more of God's goodness.

The idea of genuine love that Paul begins with in chapter 12: verse 9 continues through Paul's emphasis on the love commandment in chapter 13.

It even extends into how Paul emphasizes love within the church divisions he addresses in chapters 14 and 15.

Some might think that this letter to the Romans is all about doctrine, or justification by faith.

Here, though, as Paul is beginning to head toward the conclusion of the letter, we see once again that the Christian life for him is all about faith working through love. Let love be genuine but it's not always, is it?

When asked to define love an 8-year-old named Wyn said "I'm not sure because everyone who says they love each other also acts like they hate each other."

Let this not be said of you. May your love for each other be genuine.

We are going to join together now in prayer. As I pray, I invite you in silence or under your breath to repeat each line of the prayer so that it becomes your prayer. Let us pray:

Lord, help me to love.

Help me to give of myself to serve the needs of others;
to put their needs before my own.

Help me forgive those who have wronged me and show them grace.

May we be a church that seeks to change the world,
to welcome all of your children,
and to love people well. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer

God of love, open our hearts to each other.

Give us the courage to resist oppression.

Help us protect the world from evil.

Give us the wisdom to see ourselves as we truly are.

Give us the vision to see you and hear your voice.

Give us the courage to answer your call

Grant us the endurance to use our gifts for the purpose of your kingdom.

Work your transforming love within us that we may know your will and serve you with joy. Amen.

And now in the words Jesus taught His disciples, we too pray...

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

Hymn TFWS # 2223

They will Know We Are Christians by Our Love

Offering

God has blessed us with an abundance of gifts. We are called to offer all that we are to God—our bodies, our spirits, our minds, our time, and our money. As the body of Christ, we are called to be in ministry with others. With true generosity, let us give of ourselves this morning.

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, you have given us many gifts and drawn us together into Christ's body, the church. You have blessed us with generous and cheerful spirits. May the gifts of our money, time, and talents support the ministry of your church. Amen.

HYMN UMH # 558 **We Are the Church (V1-4)**

Benediction

Don't just pretend to love others—really love them.
Hate what is wrong and pursue what is good
as if your life depended on it.
Live in true devotion to one another,
loving each other as sisters and brothers.
Do not lose your zeal for God,
but serve Him passionately and with enthusiasm.
And do not forget to rejoice,
for hope is always just around the corner!
And may the blessing of God,
the love of Jesus Christ,
and the presence of the Holy Spirit
strengthen and sustain you in all things.
Amen.

Announcements

- Thank you to Don and Jacki for sharing your gift of music with us.
- Lawn Chair Worship continues through mid-September (weather permitting) at 10:30 Sunday morning in Mora. Church leaders meet again August to determine the plan going forward. Ogilvie continues at 9am each week.
- Online worship and mailings also continue so please if you have health conditions that put you at a higher risk for contracting the COVID virus, please allow yourself the privilege of staying home.
- If you want an Upper Room daily Meditation publication, please let the church office know and we will make sure you get one.