

# The Four Loves

**PRO TIP**  
Download other grades for alternate activities!

## CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 214, 221

## MATERIALS

- ▶ [What Does It Mean to Love?](#)
- ▶ [The Four Loves](#)
- ▶ [Feelings and Scripture](#)

## CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY STANDARDS

6.6.1 TOB Explain gift-of-self as thoughts, words or actions that place oneself at the service of others and seek the true good of the other. (cf. TOB 14:2; CCC 1609, 1667, 1889, 1914, 1926)

## SUGGESTED TIME

20 minutes

## Teacher Background

The Greeks identified four types of love. *Storge* refers to the love for familiar things that are close to you. *Eros* is the passionate love between a man and a woman. *Phileo* is the love of friends. Finally, *agape* is self-giving, sacrificial love. Much more than a feeling, *agape* love will often require us to act for the good of another in spite of how we feel. The nature of God is *agape*. We are called to share in that divine nature of love (*agape*).



### HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology asserts that there is something called “gender identity” that exists separately from sex, and that it is based on our feelings. But feelings can change, sometimes dramatically, in very short periods of time. Basing decisions of life-altering importance on feelings alone places a disordered overemphasis on the role of feelings in our lives. We can and must choose how to act on our feelings, or not to act at all.

## Activity

- A. Begin by asking the class to come up with a definition of the verb “love” What does it mean to love? Have students work in pairs or trios to compose the best definition they can on [What Does It Mean to Love?](#)
- B. Go around the room listening to students’ responses and discussing each in turn.
- C. Discuss how (whether or not students did so in their responses), many people today think of love as a feeling. But we can tell this definition is inadequate because of the Great Commandments Jesus has given us: to love God and love our neighbor. **(Matthew 22:26-40)**; He even challenges us to love our enemies **(Matthew 5:44)**.
- D. Next pose this question: If love is a feeling, how could it ever be possible to love our enemies? Would it make any sense for Jesus to command us to feel a feeling? Or could He be asking us to put aside our feelings?

### What Does It Mean to Love?

Directions: Work with a partner or trio to come up with a definition of the verb to love. What does it mean to love? Write down your definition and any other ideas you have.

To love means to ...

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THE FOUR LOVES

- E. Follow up with examples such as the ones that follow, asking the class if they can come up with additional examples of when love requires us to rise above how we might feel.
  - a. If love is a feeling, why would a mother or father stay up all night with a sick baby even if feeling exhausted?
  - b. If love is a feeling, why would a mother or father work two jobs to support the family when relaxing in the evenings and on weekends would feel so much better?
  - c. If love is a feeling, why would Jesus endure the suffering of the Cross?

F. Help students understand that all these things are possible because love is not a feeling but a choice, an action. We live in a culture that tells us to put feelings above all else, that we can “fall out of love,” and so forth, but the truth is that we do not have to live as slaves to our feelings. We can choose to make a gift of ourselves (offering thoughts, words or actions that place oneself at the service of others and seek the true good of the other). When we choose self-giving love even despite how we feel, we share in the Lord’s self-giving love. “God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange” (CCC 221). This highest form of love, which is this kind of sacrificial love, is called *agape* [pronounced uh-gawp-ay]. When the Bible talks of how God loved the world, the verb used is *agape*.

G. Now ask, is all love *agape*? No.

H. Distribute **The Four Loves** and spend some time going over the definitions at the top before giving students time to complete it independently.

I. Use the Answer Key to guide discussion.

J. Wrap up by noting how our calling as Christians is to *agape* love, which often requires us to put aside our feelings in favor of choosing what is true, and good. that in popular culture today, some people assert that there is something called “gender identity” that exists separately from sex, and that it is based on our feelings. This view of the human person is false, and fragments the person. Sex is a reality and not a feeling, no matter how sincerely it may be experienced. Feelings can change, sometimes dramatically, in very short periods of time. As human beings made in God’s image called to *agape* love, we must strive to bring our feelings under the direction of our intellect and will. In other words, we can and must choose how to act on our feelings, or not to act at all.

K. For homework, have students look up the Scripture quotes on **Feelings and Scripture**, and choose one to write a brief journal response to.

**The Four Loves**

**Directions:** Read about the four loves and then decide which type of love is described by each quote. Finally, answer the reflection question at the end.

<b>Storge</b> The love for family and familiar people who are close to you. It happens naturally.	<b>Philia</b> The natural love among friends. It happens naturally.
<b>Eros</b> Passionate love between man and woman. It happens naturally.	<b>Agape</b> Self-giving love.

- John's love for her young cousins got their family through difficult times.  
Type of love: \_\_\_\_\_
- The bride and groom embraced lovingly when the priest pronounced them husband and wife.  
Type of love: \_\_\_\_\_
- "Love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10).  
Type of love: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Feelings and Scripture**

**Directions:** Look up and read the following Scripture passages. Choose one and write a brief journal response, or a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to help you integrate what it is teaching into your life.

Proverbs 28:26	Jeremiah 17:9
Proverbs 29:11	John 14:1
Psalms 34:18	Philippians 4:6-7

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# What Does It Mean to Love?

**Directions:** Work with a partner or two to come up with a definition of the verb to love. What does it mean to love? Write down your definition and any other ideas you have.

**To love means to ...**

Accept all answers at this point in the lesson. You will discuss the true meaning of love in the next part of the activity.

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<p><b>Storge</b> The love for family and familiar people who are close to you. It happens naturally.</p>	<p><b>Phileo</b> The natural love among friends. It happens naturally.</p>
<p><b>Eros</b> Passionate love between man and woman. It happens naturally.</p>	<p><b>Agape</b> Self-giving love.</p>

- 1 Jane’s love for her young cousins got their family through difficult times.  
Type of Love:  
**Storge**  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 2 The bride and groom embraced lovingly when the priest pronounced them husband and wife  
Type of Love:  
**Eros**  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3 “Love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor” (Romans 12:10).  
Type of Love:  
**Phileo**  
\_\_\_\_\_

## STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 4 "But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28).

Type of Love:

**Agape**

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- 5 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Type of Love:

**Agape**

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- 6 "God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16b).

Type of Love:

**Agape**

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- 7 "Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me" (John 14:21).

Type of Love:

**Agape**

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### Reflection Question

Why does God require *agape* of us but not *phileo*?

**Students should recognize that *agape* is an act of will, whereas *phileo* and *storge* happen naturally. It would not make sense to command us to have a natural, unforced love. In fact, it would be impossible. But the command to love (*agape*) makes sense because we can freely choose to love.**

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# Feelings and Scripture

**Directions:** Look up and read the following Scripture passages. Choose one and write a brief journal response, or a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to help you integrate what it is teaching into your life

Proverbs 28:26

Jeremiah 17:9

Proverbs 29:11

John 14:1

Psalms 34:18

Philippians 4:6-7

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# The Four Loves



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<p><b>Eros</b> Passionate love between man and woman. It happens naturally.</p>	<p><b>Agape</b> Self-giving love.</p>

1 Jane's love for her young cousins got their family through difficult times.

*Type of Love:*

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2 The bride and groom embraced lovingly when the priest pronounced them husband and wife

*Type of Love:*

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3 "Love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10).

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