

Mark 12.28-34

If love is so important—
like determining whether I have eternal life
or enter the kingdom of God
then I need to know:
what is love?

I don't know what love is, can someone explain it to me?

“I know when some people say that they do things for you, that it is love. But I always felt that it had to be something more than that. No one in my life seems to know what I'm looking for or doesn't care to help me with this. I don't think I ever felt it emotionally. It only feels like a word to me sometimes. What are you supposed to feel like when you love someone in any type of way?”

People in the U.S. Google the word “love” about 1.2 million times a month. Roughly a quarter of those searches ask “what is love” or request a “definition of love.”

“Personally I have this feeling in my stomach and I feel really happy when I think of my boyfriend. I have this same feeling when we're kissing etc.

“When you start waiting for their messages, counting the days till you see them, can't stop wanting to touch them (like hold their hand or just have your shoulders touching) that's when you know you have it bad.”

“You’ll know what love is the moment you feel it. Take it easy and don’t think too hard about it. It’ll come to you naturally.”

“That sounds incredibly trite, but it's exactly the truth. When it happens, you just know.”

“Love is a complex neurobiological phenomenon, relying on trust, belief, pleasure and reward activities within the brain . . . These processes critically involve oxytocin, vasopressin, dopamine, and serotonergic signaling.”

“Neuroscience tells us that love is caused by certain chemicals in the brain. For example, when you meet someone special, the hormones dopamine and norepinephrine can trigger a reward response that makes you want to see this person again. Like tasting chocolate, you want more.”

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this:

‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’¹

The second is this:

‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’²

There is no commandment greater than these.”

Mark 12.29-31 NIV

¹ Deuteronomy 6.5 ² Leviticus 19.18

Jesus had surprisingly little to say about love, but what he did say provides the absolute definition of love and the standard for love.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 15.9-12 NIV

Two things we learn from Jesus' love statements:

(1) Love defines God's actions and sets the standard for love.

(2) Love is the defining characteristic of those who follow Jesus.

God so loved . . .

(1) Love is a decision.

For he chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will . . . Ephesians 1.3-5

(2) Love is interventional.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. . . . God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5.6, 8

Love motivated God to act in the most costly manner,

- ▶ without any predetermined criteria or qualifying response,
- ▶ for the good and welfare of even His enemies,
- ▶ regardless of outcome or reward,
 - ▶ simply because it was His pleasure to do so.

God is—

Islam: “God is great!”

Hindu: God is everything.

Buddhist: God is nothing.

The Buddha, like modern sociologists and psychologists, believed that religious ideas and especially the god idea have their origin in fear.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love**. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

1 John 4:7-12 NIV

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Revelation 1.5b-6 NIV