What does ‘I Love You’ Mean?

Summary

Modern culture treats love as a feeling you fall into. Scripture treats it as a decision you make — toward everyone, equally. This article separates that one universal ingredient from the family bonds, friendship, and sexual attraction that additionally belong to marriage, then turns to what fidelity within marriage actually protects.

- Biblical love as a commanded decision to will good toward everyone equally, not a feeling.
- Family bonding, friendship, and sexual attraction identified as distinct additions to that universal love, unique to a marriage relationship.
- Sexual fidelity and mental purity within marriage, drawing extensively on the Song of Solomon.
- Married intimacy approached with a “renewed mind,” free of past experience or fantasy, as central to a trusting marriage.

The full article begins on the next page.

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There are three kinds of love referred to in the Greek: **agape**, or godly love. **Phileo**, or brotherly love and **eros**, or erotic love.

"Love is above law... Justice is fulfilled in love." Love is not merely an emotion, but a principle of life. The only qualification for victory required of love is that it should be able to endure its most shattering defeat and yet remain. The golden rule of individual and social mental balance is to "Love your neighbour as your self."

So, what does love really mean? Yah'shua said in John 13:34 and 35: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another".

When asked by a lawyer, which was the greatest commandment, Yah'shua replied: "You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment...And the second is like it: `You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" *(Matt. 22:37-39).*

And James says in 2:8, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself...but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law of transgression".

When teaching on this topic of partiality, Yah'shua commanded: "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" *(Matt. 5:44).* And further, "If you love Me, keep My commandments...He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father" *(John 14:15,21).*

Again, Yah'shua says: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" *(John 15:12).*

Paul instructs the Ephesians: "Husbands, love your wives, just as the Messiah also loved the congregation [called out ones] and gave Himself for it *[us]" (5:25).* And to the Colossians: "Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them" *(3:19).* And when instructing Titus on how to teach the Israelite principles to young wives, Paul said: "Admonish the young women to love their husbands, *[and]* to love their children" *(2:4).*

When teaching the Corinthians of love, Paul said: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked,

thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love NEVER fails...And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" *(1 Cor. 13:4-8,13).*

"And this commandment we have from Him: That he who loves Yahweh MUST love his brother also...If we love one another, Yahweh abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us...For this is the love of Yahweh, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" *(1 John 4:21,12; 5:3).*

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of Yahweh; and everyone who loves is born of Yahweh and knows Yahweh...for Yahweh IS LOVE" *(1 John 4:7,8).*

"If someone says, `I love Yahweh,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love Yahweh whom he has not seen?" *(1 John 4:20).*

The Biblical concept of "love", is far different than that of our modern society. We have, based on our own way of thinking, developed an infinite variety of ways to describe what "love" is in our culture. Ask 100 people to tell you what it means to "fall in love", and you will undoubtedly get 100 widely divergent responses.

The truth is, as the Bible clearly teaches us, that love is rather a simple concept. It is in fact, ONE OF THE COMMANDMENTS! It is never referred to as a suggestion, or something to do "if it feels right". We are not asked to love if, or when we want to. We are told quite categorically; we are COMMANDED, to love!

We are COMMANDED TO LOVE our spouses, our children, our friends, our relatives, our neighbours, our fellow Israelites, our enemies; literally, EVERYONE ON THE PLANET - WITHOUT EXCEPTION! Any partiality will be taken as transgression of the law; as sin!

Like most other Biblical doctrine, "love" has been totally twisted and perverted by our traditional religious teaching and resulting cultural values. The prevailing myth of "falling in love" has pervaded our culture to the point of being an integral theme in movies, television, literature, children's books, nursery rhymes, everyday conversations, and into our daily commerce in a variety of other ways.

We have completely lost sight of the fact that love, is simply a commandment. Like all of the other commandments, we are meant to obey it. And like all of the other commandments, it is not a burden! In other words, it is just as easy to keep, and as much of a joy to keep, as all the others!

We DO NOT HAVE A CHOICE TO LOVE - we are commanded to MAKE A DECISION *(AND TO KEEP OR MAINTAIN IT)* TO LOVE EVERYONE. Not just those we want to - everyone without partiality!

If we want to truthfully call ourselves Israelites, we MUST love everyone, not just some. Yahweh and the Messiah make it very clear. If we say we love Yahweh whom we cannot see, and do not love the people

around us that we can see, then in fact we are liars! And sinners! No exceptions!

Satan has craftily deceived us into mixing our free-will ability to make DECISIONS, *(the single factor required for us to love)*, together with our family values, and with the personal character traits involved in friendships and sexual attractions, resulting in a mish-mash of ingredients, that we call "falling in love".

His strategy has been successful in getting millions of well-intentioned individuals, to break another of Yahweh's laws. This clever deception has caused millions to have their marriages fail, to suffer endless family strife, and to be unwitting participants in racial hatred, political injustice and wars.

Israelites must keep Yahweh's commandments. They must understand them in the simple and straightforward manner in which Yahweh has set them out in His Word. Not how our false religions and societies have depicted them!

First, we must remember that Yahweh is love - and that the love of Yahweh is living in each of us through His Holy Spirit. As Yahweh IS love, so are we! We ARE love! We don't "have love" or "feel love" when it is convenient. Like Yahweh does, we must learn to simply BE love. This means that without exception, we simply DECIDE to love everyone without partiality!

To love without partiality, we need to separate the single ingredient required to BE love, from all of the other ingredients that Satan has caused us to mix up in the same package. ALL FEELINGS OF AFFECTION related to family bonding, friendship and sexual attraction must be separated and treated as totally distinct from love.

Biblical love is the realization that as Israelites, we can make a simple decision, one resulting in our having compassion for all humanity. It is a special caring, merciful, selfless concern for others - all others equally, including our own spouses, children, friends, relatives, neighbours and enemies.

We grow up in family environments where we experience certain "family bonds". This family bonding is something that we feel as a result of experiences between family members. Feelings on paternal, maternal and sibling levels develop automatically in families. These bonds between various family members are the result of being together as a family unit, usually without any choice in the matter. "Family bonds" then, are something we feel in ADDITION to our love for humanity, that make growing up in a family very special to us.

As we grow up, we each in various ways, determine those characteristics in others that we find appealing. Through learning family values at home, and through experiences with people outside of our home, we develop a sense of what particular character traits we admire and enjoy in others, and therefore like to see in our friends. The qualities that we like, determine to a large degree, who we choose as friends. The qualities of "friendships" then, are something else we feel in ADDITION to our love for humanity, that make interacting with friends in our community very special to us.

Physical and sexual attraction is a facet of our development that takes place largely due to our interacting in our community. Based on many factors, including observing certain aspects of our own parents', and other couples' behaviour with each other, we form our own perceptions of what characteristics would be pleasing to us in a spouse. A "spouse", is someone very special in our lives, for many obvious reasons, not the least of which, is that they are the one person above all others in our relationships, that make it possible to perpetuate the above cycle.

We then use our experience in building strong family bonds, coupled with our experience in building strong friendships, together with our acceptance of what type of person we find sexually attractive, to determine the special combination of character and personality traits, we desire in a spouse.

So our "spouse" then, is someone that we have, in ADDITION to our feeling of love for humanity, found to be sexually attractive and that we relate to in a manner that includes developing a strong "friendship", and developing strong "family bonds". In other words, we have positive affection - WE LIKE THEM, in addition to finding them sexually attractive, and loving them, like we do all people!

Strong family bonds and friendships - qualities we like, plus sexual attractions then, are NOT aspects of, or parts of love that make a relationship with a spouse. Rather, they are wonderful aspects of our interaction with others that we ADD to our feelings of LOVE for our spouse, that make for a truly wonderful relationship.

When we say, "I love you", to our SPOUSE *(or potential spouse)*, we are in effect saying, "I love you, I find you sexually attractive, and I appreciate the strength and depth of our friendship and family bonds".

Of course, we don't always say it all at once this way - but every spouse appreciates hearing each of these distinctly separate affirmations of SEXUAL ATTRACTION, FRIENDLY AFFECTION, AND LOVE, on a regular basis.

We are all unique in our creation, and likewise we are unique in our method of expression. Bible advice on marriage is given in many verses, which invariably point to the sound principles of thorough and effective communication between spouses. The first point; "live by every Word of Yahweh". Yahweh is love personified. Yahweh authored love in His Word. Studying and living by that Word, is becoming love.

You are love. Love your friends, your families, your relatives, your enemies, strangers, your neighbours, the rich, the poor - and love your spouses. You can have absolute faith in the fact that Yahweh will bless this OBEDIENCE by giving you the patience and the wisdom necessary to build lasting friendships, strong family bonds - and of course, a wonderful marriage to the person you find sexually attractive.

If you are OBEDIENT to always love you cannot fail. If you always forgive, if you are always kind, always patient, always honest, always hopeful, never selfish, never envious, never rude, never provoked, never evil - friendships, family bonds and marriages will always survive! Love never fails!

Having established that love is not a feeling but a commanded decision — one we extend without partiality to spouse, family, friend, stranger and enemy alike — it remains to address the one relationship in which that same decision carries an additional, exclusive obligation: marriage. The sexual attraction and friendship we add to our love for a spouse, as distinguished above, are precisely what Yahweh has set apart to be enjoyed, protected and kept exclusive within marriage alone. The commandment to love everyone without partiality does not erase the special vow of fidelity a husband and wife make to one another; rather, it explains why that fidelity matters so much — marriage is the one relationship in which our universal, selfless love for humanity is deliberately joined to an exclusive, covenanted sexual bond, and it is to safeguarding that bond that the Bible's teaching on chastity and fidelity now turns.

In a society with so much emphasis on sex, it is fitting to outline how the Bible advises us to deal with this all-important issue. Principally, the Bible teaches chastity while single and fidelity while married. Typically, the question posed by teens is, "why wait?", while many adults ask, "why be faithful?"

There are many familiar Bible passages telling us to refrain from fornication *(sex prior to or outside of marriage)* and to avoid adultery. But there are also some very fascinating reasons explained in the Bible for following this timeless advice. Two verses, serve particularly well in this regard: "For this is the WILL OF Yahweh, YOUR SANCTIFICATION: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel *[body]* in SANCTIFICATION AND HONOUR" *(1 Thess. 4:3-5)*. And; "Marriage is honourable AMONG ALL, and the BED UNDEFILED" *(Hebrews 13:4)*.

It is Yahweh's Will, that we ENJOY SEX TO THE FULLEST! Yahweh knows exactly how we can expect to accomplish this. He has not given us a series of negative instructions to penalize or restrict our enjoyment - quite the contrary. Loving parents do not tell their children to touch the hot stovetop or to overindulge in candy! They rather instruct them negatively. They tell them to "not touch the stovetop" or to "not eat too much candy". Yahweh instructs us the same way. Each of His "negative" instructions ALWAYS contains at least two positive reasons - He wishes to PROTECT us and to PROVIDE for us!

Yahweh has provided us the greatest possible environment to enjoy sex to its fullest - the institution of marriage. Only by protecting our most important and powerful sex organ from becoming defiled, our MIND, can we experience sex to its fullest!

Yahweh desires us to refrain from sexual immorality that we might enjoy "sanctification" and that the institution of "marriage is honourable among all". Among ALL means all single people as well as all married people! Sanctification means that we are set apart as separate for Yahweh's holy use and purpose - the purpose obviously being that if we are obedient in this context, Yahweh will bless our marriages by rewarding us with the greatest possible degree of marital and sexual fulfilment. That's His PROMISE!

Sex is a physical act, while sanctification and honour are spiritual in context. We are free moral agents - free to make choices concerning our physical activities, including sex. But we have NO CHOICE when it

comes to being under the spiritual authority of Yahweh's Law. We are under the authority of Yahweh's SPIRITUAL Law, whether we want to be or not - regardless of belief!

Life is largely about our relationships with our family, our friends and our spouse. Any GOOD relationship, whether family, friend or spouse, will always claim honesty and trust as the central reason for its success. In marriage, trust is essential. The slightest suspicions can be devastating. Yahweh is telling us how to GUARANTEE a vitally important part of our marriage relationship - TRUST, by refraining from sexual immorality! Sex is so beautiful it must be protected, not abused, either before or during marriage.

How? Love is only love when it is totally selfless. When you enter into a marriage relationship you are committing to GIVE it your absolute best. If your marriage bed is to be "undefiled", you cannot take into it, mental images from experiences outside of it. That is why we must protect our most powerful sex organ - our MIND, from all sexual immorality. Strong memories, the result of experiences involving most of the five physical senses, are always readily recalled in the "theatre of our mind".

Our first sexual encounter is one such example. Any pre-marital sexual experiences, extra-marital affairs, or sexually pornographic material will ALWAYS damage the trust in our relationships, by programming the "theatre of our mind". How can anyone honestly be selflessly concerned with the sexual gratification of their spouse, when they are paying attention to their own needs or focusing on "reruns" from their mind's memories?

The truth is, no human being can be selflessly concerned with their spouse if they are at all concerned with "reruns" of their own past experiences or fantasies. Any spouse will sooner or later be able to tell whether your sexual concern is for them or yourself - whether you are BEING intimate, or ACTING intimate. Intimacy consummates honesty and trust - the essence of a successful marriage.

Some may be concerned that they have already "defiled" their mind - that because of past behaviour, a truly intimate relationship might no longer be possible. With "Yahweh all things are possible" *(Matthew 19:26)*. We are instructed in Ephesians 4:22-24 to, "put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND". And likewise in Romans 12:2, we are instructed to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect WILL OF Yahweh".

In other words, if your HOPE is to have a successful marriage, begin by developing a right relationship with Yahweh - study His Word. His Helper, His Holy Spirit, will help you develop a NEW MIND and lead you to a new-found faith "the substance of things HOPED for" *(Hebrews 11:1)*.

Others may be concerned that the Bible teaches only what not to do, leaving them with no way to gain so-called "sexual experience". This concern only surfaces as a result of never having read the Bible with an open, or NEW MIND. First, it is important to note, that when any two married people, virgin or

otherwise, engage themselves in a physically intimate manner, sincere and selfless in their concern to sexually fulfill their spouse, they can count on the PROMISE of Yahweh, that they possess ALL THE KNOWLEDGE necessary to overcome any lack of "experience".

Further, if we read the Song of Solomon, we will find a glorious account of the celebration of romantic love between a man and a woman. In this beautiful courting dialogue written about 960 B.C. by King Solomon and his beloved shepherd girl, love's greatest attributes are highlighted - in some ways leaving little to the imagination, while otherwise opening our minds to nearly limitless possibilities. The entire Song of Solomon should be read, preferably from a version of the Bible using a modern English translation, to fully appreciate the wisdom applied to its sensual expression of romantic love. Here are a few select verses to spark your interest: *(NKJ Version):*

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth -
For your love is better than wine...
Lead me away!. If you do not know, O fairest of women...
A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me,
That lies all night between my breasts...
I sat down in his shade with great delight,
And his fruit was sweet to my taste...
His left hand is under my head,
And his right hand embraces me...
Rise up my love, my fair one, And come away...
For your voice is sweet, And your countenance is lovely...
By night on my bed I sought the one I love...
I held him and would not let him go...
Your lips are like a strand of scarlet,
And your mouth is lovely...
You have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes...
How much better than wine is your love,
And the scent of your perfumes than all spices,
Your lips O my spouse, Drip as the honeycomb,
Honey and milk are under your tongue...
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey,
I have drunk my wine with my milk...
It is the voice of my beloved,
Open for me...my beloved...And my hands dripped with myrrh,
I opened for my beloved...His hands are rods of gold...
His mouth is most sweet...

Turn your eyes from me, for they have overcome me...
The curves of your thighs are like jewels...
Your navel is a rounded goblet...
Your two breasts are like two fawns...
How fair and how pleasant you are...
The fragrance of your breath like apples,
And the roof of your mouth like the best wine.
The wine goes down smoothly... moving gently the lips...
Let us see if the wine has budded,
There I will give you my love...
I would cause you to drink of spiced wine,
Of the juice of my fruit...
Then I became in his eyes as one who found peace".

So we see that Yahweh does not leave us uninformed. He has in fact instructed us on every facet of human interaction, giving special attention to this very important aspect of our romantic, sexual expression of love.

With a little COOPERATION and IMAGINATION, combined with His GIFT of NATURAL DESIRE, even the novice couple will find ample advice and stimulation leading to a lasting, TRUSTING relationship, by reading the Bible in the FAITH that Yahweh will help them to develop a NEW MIND - one programmed for true love, pleasure, thanksgiving and praise to Yahweh for every aspect of their most precious relationship!

Man's greatest hope is to truly enjoy ALL of his relationships; his marriage, his family and his friendships, in the manner in which Yahweh intended - with total loving trust!

If we HOPE to establish this intimacy, which consummates HONESTY AND TRUST, leading to SUCCESS in all of our relationships, we must begin by exhibiting TRUE LOVE - a totally selfless concern for others, allowing them to develop ABSOLUTE FAITH in us, "the substance of things hoped for"!

These are simply the PROMISES OF Yahweh, freely given in consideration of, and subject to our OBEDIENCE, TO HIS COMMAND TO LOVE!

← Return to the Articles Index