

# / by design series study guide

Speaker: Jojo Ruba and Rosemary Flaaten

Date: May 11/12, 2019

## SERMON TITLE: Love / By Design

**PURSUE RELATIONSHIP:** Opportunities to connect as a group

1. Who was your best friend when you were growing up? What was one of your favorite activities you did together?
2. What are the four types of love that Rosemary and Jojo talked about? What stood out for you?

**PURSUE GOD:** Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. What are some challenges that arise from our society's view of these kinds of love?
2. God shows his love for us in many ways. Read 1 John 4:8; Isaiah 49:15; John 15:15-17; Ephesians 5:25, 28-32; Romans 8:38-39; John 3:16.

Which of the four loves are reflected in each of these verses?

**PURSUE MISSION:** Seek to be the community of God's people in your community

1. When it comes to your relationship with God, which type of love do you connect with most (e.g. God's friendship love, God's parent love, etc.)? Which one(s) would you like to be more aware of in your relationship with God?
2. Rosemary and Jojo talked about agape love as a love that transforms. How does God's love for us change the way we see others? How does it help us love others?

**For Personal Prayer/Reflection:**

*1 Corinthians 13:13 says, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." Reflect on these questions:*

- *Do you live with an awareness and acceptance of God's love for you?*
- *How is his love for you reflected in your love for others?*
- *What is a relationship in your life in which you can be more intentional about reflecting God's love (e.g. to your spouse, a friend, a family member)?*

**This week's writers: Sandi Somers, Deb Matiko, Edi Dygert, Thomas Attrell, Jared Harrison**

### THE WORD (NIV)

#### **1 John 4:8**

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

#### **Isaiah 49:15**

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?

Though she may forget,  
I will not forget you!

#### **John 15:15-17**

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

#### **Ephesians 5:25, 28-32**

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

**Other Scriptures:** Ps 104:31; Romans 8: 14-17; 1 Samuel 18:1; Song of Songs; Romans 8:38-39; John 3:16; John 13:34-35

Book Reference: *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis

# / by design series study summary

The word “love” is used in many different contexts in English. We love chocolate. We love sandy beaches. We love our pets. We love our mothers. The problem is that English has only one word for love. In his book, *The Four Loves*, CS Lewis argued that God designed us with needs for different types of love. Each of these loves points to God Who is love (1 John 4:8).

**Storge: affectionate love.** Affection is the most natural, emotive, and widely diffused of loves. It covers love to family members, love of parents for their child, and love of a mother for her newborn. God sometimes describes himself using mothering metaphors (Isaiah 49:15). God intimately knows and loves His creation, including us. (Psalm 104:31). In *storge*, God calls us his family. He adopts us and we can call Him, “Abba Father – Daddy” (Romans 8: 14-17).

**Philia: Friendship Love.** *Philia* love is a higher-level love because it is freely chosen. David and Jonathan shared this kind of love (1 Samuel 18:1). This love is “a place where anything can be said without fear of criticism or ridicule. Its a place where masks and pretensions can be set aside. Its a place where it is safe to share our deepest secrets, our darkest fears, our most acute sources of shame and our disturbing questions and anxieties. Its a place of grace – a place where others are accepted as they are for the sake of who they may become” (David Benner). “Perhaps too few value it because few experience it,” wrote C.S. Lewis. One shift in today’s society is the loss of friendship intimacy because it is assumed that a close same-sex relationship means you’re gay. But *philia* represents a deep heart connection that does not move into the erotic. We need to regain the integrity of *philia* love – friendships where we are cared for and loved. Even for marriage partners, close friendships with others make the marriage stronger. In *philia* love, God calls us friends, and He invites us to share in His friendship (John 15:15-17).

**Eros: Romantic love.** Romantic love is uniquely different from friendship love. Friends are side by side as they gaze on other things outside themselves. Lovers turn towards each other, gazing at each other and becoming absorbed in each other. Friends seldom talk about their relationship, while lovers often talk to each other about their love. Romantic love is exclusive, designed by God to for one man and one woman in marriage. Variations such as polymorphous (three or more romantic partners together), two women or two men experiencing romantic love, all fall outside God’s design for marriage. Also, whether you’re married or unmarried, engaging in sexual activity, watching porn or reading erotic books, breaks the exclusivity God’s design for romantic love.

Having set those boundaries, it’s important to celebrate the wonder, beauty and intimacy of sexual union within marriage. The Biblical book, Song of Songs, celebrates this exclusive love. Scripture also teaches that this love symbolizes God’s love for the world and Christ for His bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:28-32). Romantic love is also commitment between spouses. It’s not for “as long as you both shall love and like each other.” Instead, it’s for “as long as you both shall live.” When we value this deep love, we will give unconditional love to our spouse.

**Agape, or unconditional love.** As we move from one love to another, the level of intimacy increases. In *storge*, the degree of intimacy is limited. Authentic love with friends is different from the deep knowing of husband and wife. Yet all these loves are the training grounds for agape love. Agape love knows everything about us and still loves us. Agape love is “to will the good of another”, wrote Dallas Willard, so much so that personal sacrifice would not stand in its way. Culture defines us by who we love. God defines us by Who loves us—He Himself. We can do nothing to earn God’s love, but neither can anyone or anything prevent God from loving us (Romans 8:38-39). We can understand God’s agape love as we read John 3:16, inserting our own name. “For God so loved \_\_\_\_\_ that he gave his one and only Son for me, so that when I believe in him, I will not perish but have eternal life.”

When we experience God’s agape love, our focus moves away from ourselves. We see and love the world and its people as Jesus sees does. How then can we love people the way God loves us?

**1. Lean in with love.** Be proactive, go the extra mile, don’t hold back. Love them with God’s agape love.

**2. Uphold Truth.** Jesus is both Love and Truth (John 14:6; 8:31). These two concepts are combined. When we deeply love Jesus, we want to lead people to Him. Everyone needs to be set free, and it is our role to bear witness to that!

**3. Offer hope.** When we hold on to Truth and offer Love, people begin to see themselves as God sees them. Not condemned. Not defined by their choices. Not restricted by their sin or their mistakes. Instead, they see themselves as deeply loved individuals, made in His image. Max Lucado wrote: “God loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus.” Jesus said we are to love each other, Just as He loves us (John 13:34-35). How can we demonstrate the four loves, along with agape love?