

Section 1

What Is Love?



Love (*luv*) *n.* 1. A deep and tender feeling of affection, attachment, and devotion to someone. 2. A feeling of brotherhood and good will toward others. 3. A strong, usually passionate, affection of one person for another, based in part on sexual attraction. 4. God's benevolent concern for humankind and humanity's devout attachment to God. *SYN.*

Affection suggests warm, tender feelings, usually not as powerful or deep as love; **attachment** implies connection by ties of affection, attraction, and devotion to people (or things).

“Love one another
as I have loved you.”

—John 15:12

How can I really love my family?

Chapter 1

Living the Love-Cup Principle

Love is a deep, tender feeling of affection, attachment, and devotion to someone. It's a feeling of goodwill toward others. Love is the most basic of all human needs. Without it, life is not worth living. Love is not only wanting the best for someone else, but it's treating that person as you would like to be treated. If you treat others as you would like to be treated, instead of how you feel they deserve to be treated, good things happen.

Love puts pizzazz back into relationships. It heals aching hearts. It restores hope and confidence. It sparks creativity. Love motivates you to service, frees you from bitterness, and somehow transforms the unloved into the beloved.

Nothing else in the world has the life-changing power that love has. It is patient, kind, and accepting. It is not envious, boastful, proud, rude, selfish, or easily angered. It doesn't keep score and doesn't keep bringing up mistakes. Instead, it protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres, and never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4–8). Love fights evil with good.

*Love is rain in the desert
of your heart.*

*"The greatest pleasure
of life, is love."*

—Sir William Temple

That's why it's so important to know how to really love your family. Love prevents alienation, separation, and divorce. Love is the cement that glues families together

through the tough times. Love is what makes the difference between a ho-hum existence and a vibrant, pleasant, and memory-making one. Yet, as psychologist Erich Fromm observed, "In spite of the deep-seated craving for love, almost

everything else is considered to be more important than love: success, prestige, money, power—almost all our energy is used for the learning of how to achieve these aims, and almost none to learn the art of loving.”¹ So with this thought in mind, I will try to make this incredibly complex concept very simple.

The key to learning how to love is to understand the principle of the love cup: When you’re full of love, you tend to treat others lovingly. You fill your loved ones by showering them with what I consider to be the five most important characteristics of love: care, respect, acceptance, forgiveness, and trust. The first letter of each of those characteristics spells the word CRAFT. It’s an easy way to remember what love is all about. At the end of each day, to evaluate just how well you passed on God’s heritage of love, just ask yourself: Was I caring? Respecting? Accepting? Forgiving? Trusting?

“If you realize God the Father loves you so much that He sent you the ultimate gift—His darling Son Jesus; and if you realize Jesus died on the cross to give you victory and deliverance from your every weakness; and that the Holy Spirit lives inside you to empower you with love . . . that’s the true source of agape love that you need in order to really love your family.”

—Kari St. Clair

Not only will you discover practical and creative ways to keep your family’s love cups full to overflowing, but you will also learn how to recognize the signs of cups that are dangerously low so that you can fill them before family members feel the pain of frustration, bitterness, anger, or rejection. In addition, you’ll learn what you can do to keep the love in your own cup filled to the brim, so it can splash over on to others.

No one is too young or too old to benefit from love—either as a recipient or as a giver. And if you know the true source of love, there is always an abundant supply; for when you give it away, it has a way of coming back.

What if it doesn’t come back? What if your mate is too busy, your children too small, or your friends are too involved in their own lives? Warning! If you’re not taking time to have your cup replenished by God, then the truth is, giving and giving and giving from an empty cup can be exhausting!

God’s plan for filling your love cup is this: *love creates love.* So regardless of your age and the stage of your family’s life, start with Him and then give it away—and give it away generously. In the process of giving, it *will* come back.

LOVE PRINCIPLE 1

Love creates love.

There is no better time than now to commit to learning how to *really* love your family. There is no better heritage that you can pass on to your children than

Crafting Authentic Love

God's gift of your love. There is no better way to parent than by crafting authentic love.

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1. Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, 50th anniversary ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 5.