

LOVE, SEX AND INTIMACY

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” Gen 1:27

What is that Image? God has many attributes in His character and nature, and one of those attributes is ‘Love’ – “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Therefore, we are made in the image of God; we are made to love and be loved.

God is a social God; even the very existence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit speaks of community, family and relationship. Paul, the apostle, speaks of family in Ephesians 2:14 & 15, “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Humanly speaking, with the word ‘family’, we identify husband, wife and children. There is a deeper root identity - the ‘Divine Family’. God is Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son.

John 1:18 “..... the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father”.

God also relates to people by using this rich family imagery: God is Father. God is like a nurturing mother, a providing father, and Jesus Christ, His son, is receiving a wife for himself (Rev 21:9).

When a man and woman come together in marriage, God extends to them the name that belongs to Him - ‘family’. From that moment onwards, God expects husband, wife and children to live up to the true meaning of this name by reflecting the nature of the Divine Family in our human family.

When God created Adam, He declared in Genesis 2:18 “And God said it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper compatible to him”. When Eve was created, Adam declared,

v23 “This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman (Heb. ‘Ishah’) because she was taken out of man” (Heb. Ish).

v24 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined (cling) to his wife and they shall become one (Heb. echad, one, a unit, united) flesh.”

v25 “and they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed” (Heb. ‘bush’: ashamed, embarrassed, and disappointed).

Community and fellowship was established between the divine and humanity. Gen 2:8 suggests that God would visit man in his garden in the cool of the evening. Although there was a continual connection with man and God, God would visit them in person for a time and leave. However, Adam and Eve were with each other 24/7, indicating that God put high value on human fellowship, not only in families but in fellowshiping with the saints. Fellowshiping with God, and also with each other, are both important. Enjoying God and enjoying and fellowshiping with our fellow man is important. Loving God and loving each other is important to God (1 John 4:11).

Our love, sexuality and intimacy is important to God, and, in many ways, they are paralleled in our relationships with Him and He with us. The essence of love, sex and intimacy is God-provided and through this He will enable us to reach a deeper understanding and intimacy with His son, our Bridegroom (Rev 19:7).

Let’s look at love. Since God is love and we are created in His image and likeness, in each person God has put a capacity to love. All of us have loved someone; it may be a mother/father, sibling, friend, or spouse.

The Circle of the Divine and Humanity in Love

God is the source of all love and, due to His love for us, we can then love Him (1 John 4:19) “..... we love Him because He first loved us”. John tells us that by loving God we will want to keep His commandments (1 John 5:3 – “For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments”; Jesus said in John 14:23 – “If a man loves Me, he will keep My word...”). Loving God is practically expressed by keeping His commandments. This is because our hearts are eager to please Him in an attitude of love for Him.

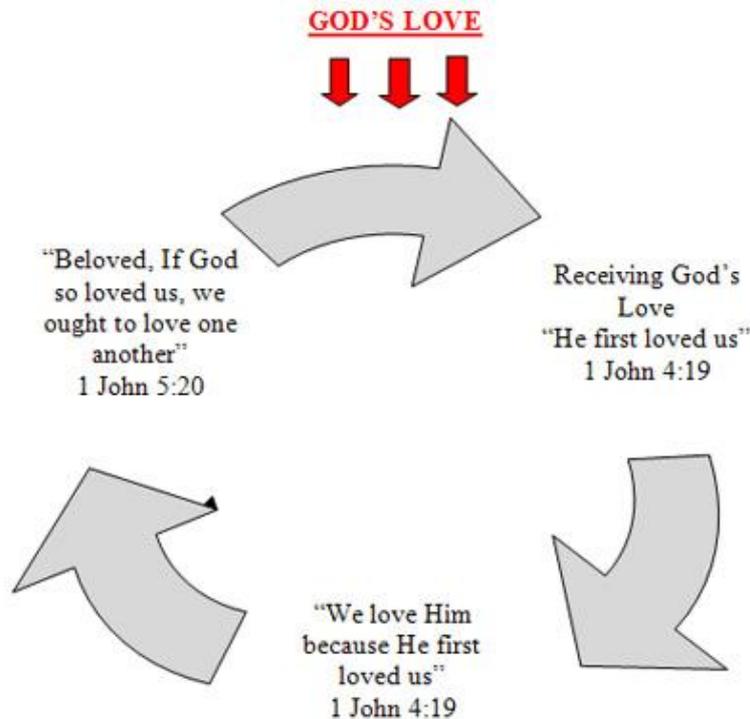
As we love God, so His love will flow through us to others.

1 John 4:7 "beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God".

1 John 4:11 "beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

This, in turn, leads us back into love for God, completing the circle (1 John 5:2a – "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God..."). Loving God is also an expression of our love for others - we can only love them fully when we love God.

Love emanates from God. The circle proceeds from love for God to love for each other, and back to love for God, each of the concepts being defined by the one which precedes it.



In the English language, we use one word for love, but, in the New and Old Testaments, there are a number of different words for love. First, we shall look at the Greek word for love then the Hebrew.

Phileo – Brotherly Love, a love between friends. It will produce a bond between people that's not easily broken, the best example of which in Scripture is probably the friendship that existed between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:1).

Eros – A love which is image-based. This is loving a person physically and sexually. Basically, Eros is romantic and sexual love. Marriage is often, but not only, based upon an expression of eros love. When a man and woman find each other attractive, it can initially lead to Eros love. However, Eros love cannot be sustained by itself, as through time it may wear thin or vanish and a relationship can break down. Eros isn't an adequate foundation for marriage if it is the only type of love present. For marriage to work at its best, **Phileo Love, Eros Love, and Agape Love are all necessary.**

Agape – To love with God's Love. This is the love that God has for us and was expressed by God sending Jesus into the world, that we might, through Him, receive Himself. He desired to give Himself to us for our benefit.

Agape is a self-giving love and cannot be described in terms of possession. 1 Cor 13:4-8 best describes God's love and, through Him, our capacity to love Him and others.

Sex and sexuality

Biblical Sex - We have an awesome God who loves us very much. His every concern is for us. Within His loving, caring, and awesome character, He has created a beautiful and intimate relationship for a man and a woman expressed in marriage. He does not want His children ignorant and hurt; His design for the physical relationship between husband and wife is based on His word, the Bible.

However, what exactly does He have to say about the sexual relationship between a man and a woman, a husband and wife?

God desires His children to find delight in the physical aspects of His creation. (**Gen 2:23-25**) In Christian teaching, sex is either a taboo subject or, at best, treated with much caution and only discussed to highlight the danger of non biblical sexual activities. When God created man and woman he also created sexual desire for each other. Sex is created by God not only for procreation but also for enjoyment between husband and wife. For example, meditate on what God is saying in **Proverbs 5:18-19**:

Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth.
As a loving deer, and a graceful doe,
Let her breasts satisfy you always;
always be intoxicated with her love.

Proverbs 5:18-19



The scenes of the book, 'Song of Solomon', take place in an atmosphere of romance and sexual encounters; this is only the first and most obvious level of understanding. On other levels, Jewish Scholars allegorise God and Israel in poetry. Christians see Christ and His Bride, the Church. The Song of Solomon (known as 'Song of Songs') can also be seen as an instructional masterpiece between God and the Christian.

The Song of Songs is unashamedly physical in its descriptions of romantic, sexual love between a groom and his bride. It is so passionate in its portrayal of physical intimacy that a Jewish boy was forbidden to read it until after age 13. The Song contains many metaphors describing various actions relating to sexual arousal and includes various Middle Eastern euphemisms.

Song of Solomon gives us a series of pictures of the relationship between a man and a woman; the joy, the struggle, the complexity.

Song of Solomon 2:7 *"Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires."*

"Do not arouse love until it so desires." It's almost as if the Shulamite woman says "you know, whatever this is, it's so good, is so beautiful, and we can't do anything to mess this up".

Song of Solomon was written in the Hebrew language which has 3 different words for love.

1. Raya – 'friend' a companion – someone to hang out with.

Song of Solomon "you are beautiful from head to toe, my dear **love**,"

S of S 4:7 (Message) "beautiful beyond compare, absolutely flawless."

2. Ahava – is the love from the will.

Ahava, is more than temporary urges, 'ahava' is making a decision to join your life with the life of another. This 'ahava' love leads to commitment.

Song of Songs 8:7 (NIV) "Many waters cannot quench **love**, rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for **love**, it would be utterly scorned".

3. Dod – To caress, to rock, to fondle.

Dod is a physical, sexual element to a relationship.

NKJV Song of Solomon 1:2 "May he kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, for your **love** is better than wine."



Song of Solomon has not just one aspect of love, but all three. True sexuality is mysterious and it involves all of you. It involves not only the body but also the soul and spirit. Love is two people coming together and giving all of themselves to each other, for life.

The 3 elements of Hebrew Love in Song of Solomon are meant to be fused together to give perfect the connection physically, emotionally and spiritually.

This is what marriage is; lover and friend for always. Jesus identifies us as His friend (philos) in John 15:15 and also as his wife in Revelation 19:7.

Song of Solomon

- 1:6 "My own vineyard" – Her body
- 1:14 "Henna" – A fragrant bush which grows and intertwines itself among vines in a vineyard.
- 1:15 "dove" – a symbol of innocence, gentleness and purity, indication that beloved was a virgin.
- 2:3 "Shade, fruit, apple tree" – All ancient erotic symbols.
- 2:5 "Lovesick" – overcome with passion.
- 2.9 "Gazelle a young stag" – suggests sexual virility as gazelles and stags in the springs.
- 2.15 "let us give full expression to our love now while our bodies (the foxes) are young (tender grapes), before ageing (the foxes) takes its toll on our bodies (spoil the vines).
- 4:10 "wine" – Symbol of supreme pleasure.

Interpretation courtesy of New-Life.net

God is family and desires that mankind be family also. He declares in His word "..... it is not good that man should be alone" Gen 2:18.

Paul's letter to the Corinthian church tells us the importance of keeping sexually connected in marriage.

"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due to her, and likewise also to her husband do not deprive one another except with consent for a time and come together again so that satan does not tempt you because of your lack of control"

(1 Cor. 7:3,5).

A Spiritual and Emotional Union

Commenting on the depth of marital companionship, Paul wrote *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the Church”* (Eph. 5:31-32 NIV).

Making love and creating a one-flesh partnership is a mysterious and dynamic process.

Undoubtedly, God wants us to enjoy our sexual relationship with our spouse governed by eros/agape love standards. God not only wants marital partners to enjoy sex but He also uses this highly intimate relationship as an example of closeness and oneness in the realm of the spirit and soul. Our sexuality is not only physical, but emotional and spiritual.

Paul, speaking to the Corinth Church about the misuse of their bodies with the temple prostitutes, states *“Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two’ he says, ‘shall become one flesh”* (physical, emotional and spiritual – Soul Tie) *“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?”* (1 Cor 6:13, 16, 19 NKJV).

The Divine Romance

Jesus, in His teachings, uses the example of a marriage custom of His day to help us understand His relationship with us, the Bride, the Church. Very briefly, there are certain main elements to the Jewish marriages of Jesus’ day. When a young man saw the girl he wanted (or the girl his father said he wanted), he would arrive with a marriage contract.



Jesus said *“You did not chose me, but I chose you”* John 15:16.

He would bring with him an agreement, giving her terms under which he would propose marriage. The contract would include the ‘bridal price’ (this still takes place in many parts of the world). The bridegroom would present himself to the bride, offering a suitable price for her, and she and her father would consider his price. The ‘bridal price’ was such that, in many cases, it was very sacrificial giving to show his love for his bride.

5

Paul says about Jesus in 1 Cor. 6:20 *“for you were bought at a price”*. The bridal price paid for us is the blood of the son of God, Jesus Christ. If the terms were suitable, the bride and bride groom would drink a cup of wine together and seal the agreement. The groom would pay the price.

Jesus drank the cup with his bride. It was at the passover table not long before His death. *“Then he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink you all of it for this is my blood of the new covenant”*. **Matt 26:27, 28.**

After the agreement was made, the groom would depart, but say that he was away to prepare a place for his bride. He would go to his father’s house and build a separate building on his father’s property, or decorate a room in his father’s house. He would make the bridal chamber beautiful and fit for a perfect honeymoon. It would be stocked with provision of food and drink because the bride and groom will remain together in the room for 7 days. However, the bride would not know when the groom would return to take her with him to the father’s house.

Jesus said in John 14:2, 3 *“In My father’s house are many mansions ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*

During the time of departure, the bride would have been in her preparation period, as she made herself ready. This period of time was referred to as ‘consecrated’ - a ‘set apart’ time.

Rev 19:7 *“and His wife has made herself ready”*.

The bride did not know when the bridegroom would come back for her, but it would not be until the home was ready for her. This was not the groom’s decision, but his father’s. The father decided when everything was in order for the bride to come. The bride, with her sisters and bridesmaids, all waited with their lamps ready.

When the big moment arrived, the bridegroom, very ready to get his bride, would with his young men set out in the night to playfully try and surprise his bride. There were rules to be observed to consider the bride’s feelings. Someone in the wedding party would give an early warning shout, then the groom would arrive for his beloved bride.

Matthew 25:6 *“and at midnight a cry was heard: Behold, the bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him!”*.

This is what Jesus’ Bride on earth is waiting for, that midnight cry!

1Thessalonians 4:16 *“For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord”*.

When the wedding party arrived at the groom’s father’s house, the bride and groom would go straight into the bed chamber; the door was shut and no-one could enter. All the wedding guests were now assembled and were waiting for the news. The friend of the bridegroom would wait near the door of the chamber, waiting for the bridegroom to declare that their marriage had been consummated (become one flesh due to sexual intercourse) and the best man would tell all present, “It is done”. The celebrations would then begin and would continue for the entire week.

Rev. 19:7 *“Let us rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the lamb has come”*.

And, hopefully, they didn’t run out of wine as it happened at Cana of Galilee. (John 2:3).

This account of the bride and groom is based on tradition at the period of the life of Jesus, who uses the same theme as an **analogy** of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Courtesy of Zola Levitt

Intimacy

Intimacy means: close or warm friendship, personal relationship and/or sexual relationship.

The intimacy that is meant in this study is personal relationship both emotionally and sexually, based on the understanding of agape love.

6

God chose the illustrations of husband and wife, love and marriage, sexual intimacy, and covenant keeping partnership to convey to us, in the nearest sense, the understanding of intimacy with Him. Paul, in Ephesians 5:32, says that *“it is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church”*.

IN UNDERSTANDING THESE CONCEPTS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE DO NOT ANTHROPOMORPHISE GOD (TO MAKE HIM HUMAN). AS HUMANS, WE ARE LIMITED IN OUR EXPERIENCES AND UNDERSTANDING, THEREFORE WE FALL SHORT IN TRULY UNDERSTANDING GOD.

Let us look at the parallel examples of intimacy between husband and wife, wife and husband, Believer (Bride) and God, God and Believer.

Sexual activity is connecting with another in a specific way. With husband and wife, it is connecting physically, emotionally and spiritually. Between a Believer and God, it is connecting spiritually and emotionally (spirit and soul).

Intimacy, is the closest experienced possible between husband and wife as they are one flesh and also one in soul and spirit (1 Cor 6:16). It is this 'connection' that enables them to continually flow in deep understanding and love for each other.

Husband and wife, through intercourse, become one flesh; human and God, through the new birth, become one spirit.

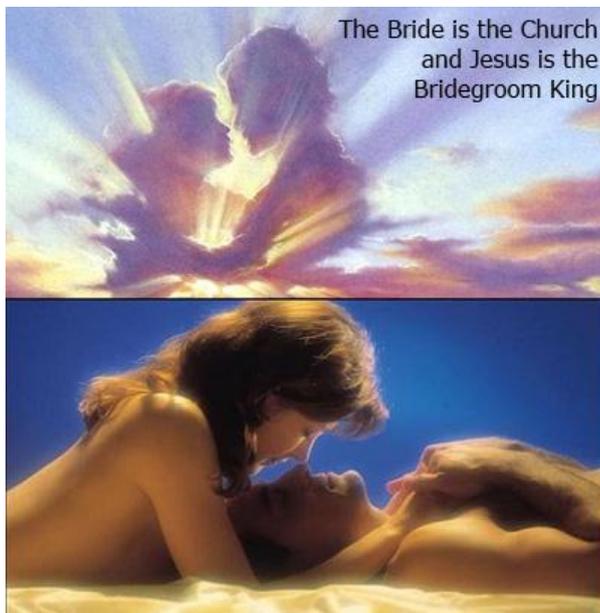
John 3:6 "That *which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit*".

1 Cor 6:17 "But He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him."

John 17:20 "..... those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as you, father, are in me and I in you, that they also may **be one** in us...."

Husband and Wife

Nurture and growth in intimacy, in a marriage, come through spending quality time with your partner. They come through using words that affirm, words that declare love, and words that speak and act according to agape love principles in 1 Cor 13:4-8. It is showing care and touch (both non-sexual and sexual); it is showing trust and being vulnerable with each other, being naked both physically and emotionally, knowing that the other will not betray your trust. A loving kiss imparts love, acceptance, tenderness, and passion. We must constantly make the choices that will lead to a deeper level of intimacy. The Holy Spirit helps us to grow in love, sex and intimacy with our covenant partner. If we ask Him, His desire will be to do so.



7

God and the Believer

Spiritual nurturing in God is achieved through spending quality time together, connecting with our Lover-God. Intimacy will be achieved if you recognise that you are His (Jesus) beloved Bride for whom He paid a great

price. Use words to build and nurture your intimacy; words of praise and worship, words of affirmation, words of love built on 1 Cor 13:4-8. Allow spiritual kisses from your bridegroom (Song of Songs 1:2 *“Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth”*) and kiss Him. Psalm 2:2 *“Kiss the Son”* – Kissing in the spiritual realm is to impart and receive intimate life, meditating on your divine romance, with its tenderness, closeness and affection. Nurturing your intimacy with God is to bare yourself before the Lord with open heart. Consider the woman with a flask of very costly oil and how she ministers her love to Jesus in Matt 26:6-13. Consider the intimate relationship between John and Jesus that enabled John to lean back on Jesus’ breast, John 13:25. Jesus has a passionate desire to bestow more of Himself to you. He deeply loves you, His precious Bride. If you ask the Holy Spirit to help you to connect in a deeper way, His desire will be to do so.

Deuteronomy 6:5 *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”*

God Almighty, The Great I AM, Creator of the universe is to be loved and worshipped as such, but also desires that we, His children, will love Him as Abba (Dad).

Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who is Almighty God, is to be loved and worshipped as such, but He also desires that we will love Him as our Bridegroom.

Rev 22:12 *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to everyone according to his work. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”*

Rev 22:17 *“And the Spirit and the Bride say “Come!”*

