

Love Divine

Some attribute the quote “Love is an action verb” to famed psychologist Dr. Benjamin Spock (“Having children has taught me that love is an action verb.”), while others seem to attribute it to Chris Sullivan (“Love is an action verb, and romance is the result of those actions.”), and Laura Silverstein wrote a book titled “Love is an Action Verb.” I don’t know who coined the phrase, but they’re only *partially* correct.

“Love” is variously defined and demonstrated, even in Scripture, with at least three different Greek words being commonly translated as such (*astorgas* {“unloving” or “without natural affection}, *phileo*, *agape*). However it is defined or illustrated, “love” is required of Christians in several different applications:

- God, Mark 12:30;
- Truth, 2Thess.2:10; Ps.119:97;
- Brethren, 1John 4:7-11;
- Spouses, Eph.5:25; Titus 2:4a;
- Children, Luke 1:17; Titus 2:4b; and,
- Enemies, Matt.5:44-48.

Conversely, “love” is also forbidden in some applications:

- World (and things of), 1John 2:15-17;
- Mammon, Matt.6:24; and,
- Self / Physical Life, Luke 9:23; 14:26.

But Jesus makes it clear that “love,” properly understood and applied, must be **all encompassing**; we must “love” with **all our**: (from Mark 12:30)

- ✓ **Heart**- all our *affections* and *emotions*, our *emotional selves*
- ✓ **Soul**- our *innermost being*; the *core* of who we are; our *spiritual selves*
- ✓ **Mind**- our *intellect* and *reason*, our *mental selves*
- ✓ **Body/Strength**- our *physical selves*

So, how do we “love” in all these applications and ways? Is it a product of the *heart* or *soul* (inner being) that is uncontrollable, as in, “You can’t help whom you love?” Or, does love originate/result from the *physical senses* (thus, the *body*) of touch or sensuality? Is that how we arrive at “love”? While these may be the most common concepts of “love” and its origin, they are **misconceptions** for they ignore and exclude the **mind/intellect**, cf. Matt.22:37!

Such does not imply that “love” is the product only of the mind, but it does highlight a typical problem of our modern concepts- that “love” stems from either the *heart* (emotions) or *body* (aka “chemistry”), or some combination of the two which eventually infects and encompasses the *soul* (thus becoming “*soul mates*”), but somehow does so to the exclusion of the *mind*... that “love” and our organ for *intellectual decision-making*, (the brain) are mutually exclusive. Perhaps this is why societal concepts of “love” are so far *off the rails*! Let’s see if we can make this simple...

Not only can and should “love” include intellectual decision-making (i.e. the mind), it must do so! How else can we refuse to “love” those *objects* or in those *realms* which God (the *source/originator* of it) forbids? Unless we **decide (mentally) NOT to love the world**, to other *parts of us* will. Unless we **decide (mentally) NOT to**

love the *mammon*, to other *parts of us* will; and, unless we **decide** (*mentally*) **NOT to love ourselves and our physical lives** more than God and serving Him, the other *parts of us* will! And conversely, our **minds** (*mental selves*) must take the lead and **decide to “love”** those whom we should: **God**, Mk.12:30; **Truth**, 2Thess.2:10,12-13; **Brethren**, Rom.12:9-10; **Spouses**, Eph.5:25ff; Titus 2:4; **Children**, Heb.12:6ff; Titus 2:4; and, **Enemies**, Matt.5:44-48.

Unless and until we properly understand and come to grips with divinely defined and originated “love,” we will never be able to truly love anything or anyone... and will continue to suffer the disastrous repercussions of its imposters. (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)