

“Love is the Way”

Session 1

Chapter Summaries:

Chapter 1 - What is this thing called love?

Bishop Curry describes the different dimensions of love contained in our single English word and how *agape* – love that looks outward – is the foundational to how God created us and to how we are called to be in relationship with God and with each other. He tells the stories of Fannie Lou Hamer, Frances Perkins and Meghan Finn who lived out *agape* love in the world by serving others – and calls love “God’s GPS for living.”

Chapter 2 -Looking for God

In Chapter 2 Bishop Curry starts by asking “How do I find God’s love?” He tells his own family story – a story of losing his mother at an early age and of how the love of his grandmother and the community that surrounded them supported and sustained them through their grief. He reminds the reader that “understanding that love never ends does not erase grief” and shares stories of how we can “do love” by building a community of love.

Story: Chapter One, pages 14-16

Many languages have several words for love, to encompass all the different kinds and dimensions. The three most frequently used in Koine Greek, the language of the New Testament, are *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*. *Eros* is romantic or sexual love. Our English word erotic comes from that. *Eros* is what Valentine’s Day is about. *Philia* is fraternal or brotherly love, which is why the city of Philadelphia is called the City of Brotherly Love. And finally there’s *agape*, which is love for the other – sacrificial love that seeks the good and well-being of others, of society, of the world.

Unfortunately, in English we have only the one word, *love* for everything from telenovelas to Mother Teresa. And so the different dimensions and nuances have been muddled together, which has obscured love’s true power to instigate a better world. *Agape*, love that looks outward, is the love that I’m most interested in.

You may not have heard the Greek word before, but you've experienced agape. Think about someone who impacted your life for the good. Someone who stood by you, pushed you, believed in you, maybe even sacrificed for you. Odds are they weren't doing it because it served them. They were doing it because they cared about you. Because they wanted life's sweetness to open wide to you.

Love is a firm commitment to at for the well-being of someone other than yourself. It can be personal or political, individual, or communal, intimate or public. Love will not be segregated to the private, personal precincts of life. Love, as I read it in the Bible, is ubiquitous. It affects all aspects of life.

An oft quoted passage in the New Testament says, "God so love the world that he gave his only son." The Greek word used by the New Testament writer for the word love is agape. And the Greek word used for world is *kosmos*, but what it really means is everything – "everything that is." Kosmos is what the spiritual is talking about when it says of God "He's got the whole world in his hands."

God so loved the world that he "gave". God gave. God did not take. God gave. That's agape. That's love. And love such at that is the way to the heart of God, the heart of each other, It is the way to a new world that looks something more like God's dream for us and all creation, what Dante spoke of as "the love that moves the sun and stars."

Questions to discuss in group or individually

In what way do you understand agape love?

How do you recognize whether your actions are acts of love or acts of compromise?