

DAILY DOCTRINAL REFLECTION

Six Theories of Love

In our last few Bible class, we have been noting the various theories or views of love. We have seen that there are at least six dominant concepts of or ways that people talk about love.

First, there the emotional or passionate view. According to this view, love is defined or circumscribed by one's feelings or passions toward the beloved. One is said to really love the beloved if the attraction of the beloved is characterized by powerful feelings. Those who oppose this view say that love is not about feelings or emotions. However, according to realism, those who define love by feelings as well as those who deny that emotions have anything to do with love are both seriously mistaken.

A second view of love is instrumental. This is love that is tethered to the benefits that the beloved offers. "I love my wife so much because she keeps the house clear, makes good meals, takes care of the kids, and provides me sexual enjoyment." The objector is only too quick to point out that what is loved are the benefits and not her as a person. "Love" for her is simply instrumental—the means to other ends. Yet, there are certain aspects of this kind of love that does seem right. Certainly, there is an aspect of instrumental love that rings true when the husband loves his wife *more* because she sacrificially pours herself into her children in contrast to one who ignores the kids and is a bad mother.

A third view of love is the responsive view. According to this view, the lover loves the beloved in response to the qualities in the person. "I love him because of the x, y, z qualities in him." "I love him because he is godly, honest, and caring." The detractors would say that such a love is a love of the qualities and not him as a person. On this account, if someone else came along that had greater xs, ys, and zs, then you would love him more. Although true love is not defined or circumscribed by the qualities in the person, it certainly seems valid that when your spouse does possess great qualities, it enhances love for him.

A fourth view of love is the relationship view. "I love him because he is my husband." Critics would be quick to point out that it is the relationship and not the person that is really loved. Yet, there is something very true about love and a relationship. For example, we love our kids more than our neighbor's kids because they are our kids.

A fifth view of love is volitional. "I love him because love is a choice." This love really is not about the object of love at all. The love has nothing to do with the person. It is all about the quality of the volition of the one loving. Like the above, there is something right about this as well as wrongheaded about this. The biblical commands to love others are injunctions on the will. However, if one's love is not about anything about the person, is it true love? No!

The sixth view of love is true love. It is based on the metaphysical realities of external reality rather than starting with the mind (e.g., definitions, word studies). True love has two interdependent desires. Let us call them D1 and D2. D1 is a desire of the good of the beloved. This is unconditional and seeks the good of the beloved regardless of any factor about him. D2 is desire for union with the beloved according to the proper office of love (wife, husband, child,

parent, fellow believer). D2 is very conditional and includes aspects of the five above types of love. D2 is very mutable and varies in degrees over time. In D1, a wife can always seek the best for her husband (which is always God) regardless of how he treats her. This is not true in D2 love, which is all about the relationship. She can lack a D2 love relationship with him due to something in her or him. However, a true D2 cannot exist apart from D1. In sum, nothing stands in the way of D1 whereas in D2 there are many obstacles that can disrupt the flow of love in relationship.

Life in the D1 and D2 love of God,

Pastor Don