

Three Loves of Life:
Philos
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

This is the second of three sermons on the three “Loves of Life.” Last week I talked about *eros*, the love that says, “I love you for what you do for me.” Today I am talking about *philos*, the love that says, “I love you for what we do for each other.” Next week I’ll be talking about *agape*, the love that says, “I love you for what I can do for you.”

Our single word for love is ambiguous and can cause confusion. Imagine a woman standing at the kitchen sink after having cooked a fine meal for her husband. He comes in and gives her a kiss on the cheek and says, “I love you.” She replies, “If you really loved me, you would be in here helping me wash these dishes.” Does he really love her? Sure he does. But he is talking about *eros* love. He loves her for making his life so pleasant. But she is talking about *philos* love. *Philos* love calls for them to work together as a team.

Today, we look at *philos*. I love you for what we do for each other.

Philos is the love of friendship, family, fellowships, teams, tribes, partners and companions. It is the love that the members of a church share. It is the love that develops between people who have made a pact to unite to face the challenges of life and to accomplish the dreams and goals that they have agreed upon.

Philos occurs when people start saying “we” instead of just “you” and “me.” When people make a commitment to each other that unites them, they create something new and different. It is more than just individuals cooperating together to better meet their individual needs. A new entity is created, something bigger and stronger than just the individuals. What’s the old saying? “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

Of course, a strong, healthy marriage is held together with *philos* love. When I meet with couples to do pre-marital counseling, I always ask them what it is they like about this person so much that they want to make a life-long commitment to each other. Usually I get answers like, “He has such a wonderful sense of humor,” or “She is so easy to be with,” or “I trust him to be faithful to me,” or “She is such a beautiful person.”

I don’t remember anyone ever saying to me, “I love this person because he or she is such a great team player.” But, after 38 years of marriage and having the opportunity to observe thousands of marriages, I would say the quality a person should put at the top of the list for the one they decide to marry is that this person should be a team player.

Philos love is different from *eros* love in that *eros* is all about emotions. *Philos* is about decisions. We decide to love people with *philos* love, whereas we fall in love with *eros* love.

There are emotions connected to *philos* love. We call it by various names: team spirit, loyalty, patriotism...In the church we call it being united in the Spirit. In marriage we call it becoming one in the flesh.

I remember on our wedding day as Becky and I were driving away from the church, after our wedding reception, down the country road that connects Elkhart and Palestine, suddenly I had the overwhelming sense of a unity with Becky. It was a mystical connection. For the first time I understood what the Bible means when it talks about the two becoming one flesh. Marriage isn’t just two people, each doing things to make the other one happy. There is a uniting of dreams and goals that you want to accomplish together. You are one. You create something

new. Before we arrived at that church, we were Wesley and Becky. When we left that church, we were the Welborns.

These bonds of affection develop after we make the decision to make a commitment to people.

Philos love is more than just a mystical sense of being united. It is a very practical love. Life is hard and demanding. It is nearly impossible to survive life alone. You need people to walk with you. We need a spouse, or friends, or a family, or neighbors.

As Ecclesiastes says, it is better for two to walk together. I would paraphrase that to say, it is better to walk with companions as we make our journey through life. Why? Ecclesiastes tells us why:

If we journey with companions, we will accomplish more: “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.”

If you journey through life with companions, you save each other from discouragement and despair: “Two are better than one...For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to the one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.”

When you journey through life with companions, the loving fellowship helps keep the chill from entering your soul and turning you cold inside: “Again, (two are better than one). If two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone?”

When you journey through life with companions, you are much stronger to stand against those who would destroy you: “And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Those who share *philos* love have far better and happier lives than those who try to face life alone—If, and this is a big “if,” if they are a part of a healthy team.

I don’t care how much you love people, if you can’t work together as a team, you are not good for each other.

It is not enough just to love one another. We have to be able to build a good team with the people we love. What’s a good team? It is a team that can get the job done without sacrificing any of the team members to do it.

A good team has to agree what jobs need to be done. They need to agree how to organize themselves to get the job effectively. All the members need to do their part. Each member should be given responsibility to do those things for which they have special gifts and interests. At the same time, every member should be flexible enough cover other’s responsibilities and to do essential tasks for which they have no special gifts or interests when circumstances call for it. Every member should be allowed and required to contribute to the team’s success and to share in the benefits of the team’s success. Every member should be treated with dignity and respect. No one should be overworked.

These are principles that are true in a business, on a football team, in a marriage, in a family, in a society, in a church... Wherever people come together, these principles apply.

I don’t care how much you love one another, if you or the other members of the team cannot work together as a team, you are probably doing more harm than good to one another. So, if you really love one another, learn how to be a great team.

And start by learning how to be the best team player you can be.

That begins by putting the needs and goals of the team ahead of your own. I remember when I was playing baseball as a kid, I was heavily into statistics. I kept a running total of my times at bat and the number of hits I had gotten, so that I could keep up with my batting average. One night I got a hit, and when I got back to the dugout, I was bragging about my batting

average to some of the other guys. The manager was a crusty old guy. He had played in the minor leagues for a number of years. He heard me talking about my batting average, and he walked over to me and said, loud enough for everyone to hear, "Son, no one cares what your batting average is. There is only one statistic we care about, and that's the score." He taught me an important lesson about being a team player. The success of the team is what counts. A successful team doesn't need stars. It needs players who do their part to help the team win.

Sometimes that means doing things that you're not good at or enjoy doing, but doing it anyway, because it has to be done and there is no one else to do it.

For years I kept the books and paid the bills at our house, while Becky was teaching school and taking care of our two children. I kept the books on our computer, using Quicken. I am comfortable with basic bookkeeping. I actually get a sense of wonder and awe, when I successfully balance the account. However, about the time that our nest emptied and Becky retired from teaching, I got so busy at the church that it was difficult for me to keep up with paying the bills and keeping the books. So, Becky took it over. This is way out of Becky's comfort zone. It's not something she does naturally. She doesn't think like an accountant. But she does it to help free up my time. That's being a team player.

Last week I talked about *eros* love. It's the love that says, "I love you for what you do for me." *Eros* love are the feelings you feel for the people in your life who make you happy. *Eros* love includes the romantic feelings that you have for that special person, although it is not just romantic feelings.

If our relationships were fruit trees, *eros* would be the blooms that give the tree the perfumed smell, the beautiful colors and fruitfulness.

Philos, on the other hand, would be the trunk and the limbs. *Philos* gives our relationships the strength to stand and endure. Now, the trunk and the branches may not be as attractive as the blooms, but the blooms come and go. A tree can survive without blooms. It can't survive without the strong, healthy framework the trunk and the branches provide. If you took a tree, separated it into its parts and put them on a set of scales, there would be no comparison between the weight of the blooms and the weight of the branches.

That's the way it is with healthy relationships. *Eros* love gets a lot of attention. But the great bulk of any enduring relationship is *philos*.

The decision to love with *philos* love must be renewed regularly. Decide again today to rededicate yourself to being a good friend, a faithful membership of the church, an effective member of your work team. Decide again to work as a team with your wife or your husband. Be the best team player you can be. Everyone benefits when team players work together with commitment and love.

Dr. Wesley Welborn
Senior Pastor