

# Gathering

## LOVE

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In this month where we celebrate love, presents, flowers and special dinners take center stage in efforts to show our love for each other. But love is much more than that. When we were dating, we shared many special moments as we were getting to know each other and more importantly, as we cultivated our love.

The Bible is full of examples of love. We recognize God's love at work when we read about Abraham, Moses, and Esther just to name a few. However, there is no greater example of love than God sending his only son to save humanity from sin. This type of love is known as agape love: an unconditional, sacrificial love originating from God himself. The question is, how can we - imperfect as we are - cultivate this type of love? The apostle John provides a simple answer in 1 John 4:11 (NIV):

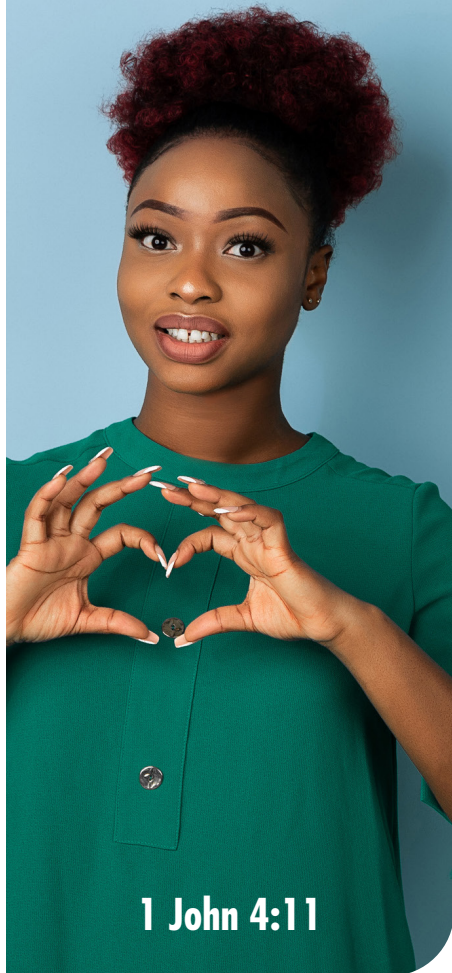
*"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."*

The apostle Paul reminds us that God's love is patient, kind, unselfish, it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (*1 Corinthians 13*). It's the love that never fails and never gives up on us. As husband and wife, we are consistently growing in our love for each other and for God. Our committed love goes beyond special occasions. It involves intentionality, forgiveness, and giving of ourselves selflessly for the well-being of the other. That is the type of love God wants us to cultivate towards others.

As people who have experienced the love of God and count with the presence of the Holy Spirit to help us, His love at work in us can be manifested perfectly in our agape love to others so that through our love, they get to know the love of Christ for them. In this 'me first' society it may seem difficult but remember that Jesus gave his life for us to experience the unconditional love of God.

After reading scripture, consider these questions:

1. Using the Bible characters mentioned above, share some of the moments where God showed His agape love towards them and/or through them to His people?
2. How have you experienced God's agape love in your life?
3. What are some practical ways you can show agape love toward others?
4. What are some challenges you have faced during moments where it has been difficult to show agape love to others?



**1 John 4:11**

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type of love; **Storge** – A familiar love (*like father-child*); **Philia** – A brotherly type of love (*like between friends*) and **Agape** – An unconditional, sacrificial type of love.

Each one of these words for love can be found throughout the Bible. Go deeper into the

Word of God with the following questions to help you explore how you can cultivate agape love in all your relationships:

- Can you identify scriptures that give an example of each type of love? Ex. Philia – Romans 12:10
- How is agape love described in 1 Peter 4:8 and what is the result of such love?
- How does Ephesians 5:2 define 'living a life of love'? What are some things that you need to sacrifice today in order to show this same type of love?
- Read 1 Corinthians 13, substituting the word 'love' for 'Jesus'. Repeat the exercise using your name... what areas is the Spirit revealing you to improve in order to cultivate agape love in your relationships?

Written by Mabel Cuevas & Richard D. Lopez  
– Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands Division



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