

Continuing with the theme of God's love from Dave and Emma's All Age Worship Service, let's try to unpack the 'unpackable' a little more. It makes me smile when Paul prays in Ephesians 3:19, **"that we may know this love that surpasses knowledge" !**

Love is a word that is bandied about very lightly at times in our modern culture. Pop songs and soap operas freely use eros love to engage our emotions, but often with little or no commitment.

We understand that there are different kinds of love.

- **Philia** — Affectionate Love. **Philia** is love without romantic attraction and occurs between friends or family members. ...
- **Pragma** — Enduring Love. ...
- **Storge** — Familiar Love. ...
- **Eros** — Romantic Love. ...
- **Ludus** — Playful Love. ...
- **Mania** — Obsessive Love. ...
- **Philautia** — Self Love. ...
- **Agape** — Selfless Love.



When I think about love, I eventually come back to this simple nutshell definition. ***If I love someone, I want the very best for them.*** Emma spoke about the Repair Shop programme where people bring much loved objects to be restored to their optimal condition. Interestingly, in the rocking horse story that Emma shared, it was some of the wear and tear that made the item special, as it reminded the family of the child that had died, so this was incorporated into the restoration.

Imagine for one moment that the rocking horse was sentient, (able to perceive and feel) the process of restoration would have at times been excruciating and painful, and given the choice, the horse would have probably wanted the worn fabric to be replaced.

God loves us with a perfect love. He loved us before the creation of the world and he sees us complete in his love in eternity! As we journey with God now, The Holy Spirit is at work restoring us to our true identity as his children. This at times can be a painful process as he removes deep lies, planted by the enemy that have defined and damaged us. There may even be scars that we would like him to remove, but he chooses to leave, because they remind him of Jesus! This restoration process is tangible evidence that we are loved! **God does love us just as we are, but he loves us enough not to leave us there!** His love is also beautifully woven together with his truth.

As a parent that loves my children, I'm aware that that love demonstrates itself in a whole range of ways, including.... making them do chores that they don't want to do, stretching them out of their comfort zones, exposing them to new experiences, disciplining them, having fun together and providing for their physical needs.

John tells us that **"God is love"** (1 John 4:8) and that we are **"Children of God"** (1John 3:1)

I really love this next verse, it reminds me that God really does care.

"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." Hebrews 12:5-6



1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes love like this...

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

I think this definition of love creates a beautiful description of God.

Is this how you see God?

Emma concluded her talk with some questions, here they are...

Do you believe God truly loves you?

Do you believe that God looks at you and sees something He has carefully and lovingly made, something He sees as beautiful?

Do you believe He truly knows you inside and out, and loves you because of that, not in spite of it?

In his introduction Dave led us to this verse...

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

May we be **shaped** by this kind of love and in turn **shape** our communities to reflect God's heart.

