

PRIMAL LOVE

PULSE OF SPIRIT

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In this edition of the *Pulse of Spirit*, I am taking on the daunting task of describing how love works in the human experience. So, if you are ready for a deep dive on the subject, let's go.

The ancient Greeks spoke about eight forms of love:

Eros ~ Passionate, romantic, and erotic love

Philia ~ Deep friendship or affectionate love

Storge ~ Familial love, affection, or natural devotion

Ludus ~ Playful, flirtatious love

Pragma ~ Enduring, practical love

Philautia ~ Self-love

Mania ~ Obsessive or possessive love

Agape ~ Selfless, unconditional love

If the Greeks were right, love is relevant in many facets of human life. What is behind all forms of love? Is there a primal form of love that is behind all others?

I just saw a photo of a baby boy who was born into the world today. He was glorious. The

source of life that grew and animated him in the womb loved him so much that it gave him the opportunity for incarnation. The life source will continue to love him, giving him the power to take every breath he will ever take and every heartbeat he will ever beat. It will be with him always; it loves him that much.

The Book of John says this about Jesus' birth:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.

John 3:16

The Greek word translated as “only begotten” was *monogenē*. The original meaning of that word was “one-of-a-kind,” not “one and only.” And isn't that the loving intention behind every birth? Every baby is a gift to the world. God doesn't have only one offspring.

This is primal love. The point is that we were loved first. Before we ever thought about loving anyone else, we were loved, and before we ever

thought about loving God. The source of life seeks to love the world through us—through the totality of our life. And it begins by loving us.

News anchor and author Savannah Guthrie has her own way of saying it: “Mostly what God does is love you.” However you think about it, we are being loved from inside as atoms, cells, tissues, glands, and organs generate life force. We are loved from above by the sun, the moon, the stars, the wind, and the rain. The power of life has been beating our hearts since before we even had one. The cosmos is alive and sentient. It is Being. It is God. It is loving us now. And what greater gift of love could there be than life?

Do we know it? Are we receiving it? If we are breathing, of course, we are. But perhaps not all of it. Perhaps we are unconscious of how much we are loved and how precious we must be as a one-of-a-kind human being.

The apostle John says this about the spiritual impulse he received:

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,
and heard behind me a great voice, as
of a trumpet.*

*And I turned to see the voice that spake
with me.*

Revelation 1:11, 13

He had to turn to the source of that impulse to receive what was being given to him. And so it is with every one of us. To fully receive the primal love that is coming to us, we have to face it. We have to open our heart to it and let it in. Otherwise, we end up being like the hardpan of some of the fields here in Colorado, where I live. It can rain, but the rain isn't sinking in.

Over 3,000 years ago, Moses led a mixed multitude of refugees out of Egypt and across a

desert to the Land of Canaan. The story of Moses' life and leadership shows the experience of a profoundly spiritual man who had a mystical encounter with the Divine. It also tells how he had to rely on his connection with the Divine to bring order to the chaos of the people he led. And so, he is known as the Lawgiver. It is not hard to imagine how he was called to be direct and commanding to bring this mixed multitude to the Promised Land.

Perhaps his most central teaching is what came to be known as the First Commandment:

*And thou shalt love the LORD thy God
with all thine heart, and with all thy
soul, and with all thy might.*

Deuteronomy 6:5

Jesus reiterated this in his ministry, including the commandment to love with all your mind.

It is understandable that these words come down to us as an instruction and a law. They carry the power of a moral imperative, as if we were supposed to love on command. Does anyone really learn to love because they are commanded to do so? As contemporary speakers of the English language, “Thou shalt” seems terribly imperious.

Imagine someone who is not feeling loved—someone who is feeling alone, desolate, deserted. Go and tell that person they have to love the source of their being. What kind of response do you think you will get?

That person doesn't realize that they have been loved first. They haven't turned to the source of that love. And now you are going to tell them they have to love a God they've never met—who they don't see, feel, or know?

What has to happen first for that person is that they have to turn to the source of the love that is there for them. And that's not easy, because it is not a physical turning. They have to find that source in themselves, or outside themselves, however they conceive that to be. Then they have to soften their heart so they can let it in. If there is hardpan covering their soul, it has to be loosened so the rain can sink in.

God has loved us first. When we feel and know that, a response of gratitude wells up. *Thank you.* And we love back, not because we have been commanded to do so, but because it is part of a deep heart exchange.

While it is true that what Moses taught was a law that is as certain as gravity, to really come to know and understand how that law works in human experience, it has to become more than an instruction or a moral imperative.

What if the words from Hebrew in Deuteronomy were translated as "You will love the LORD thy God with all?" That might be a wondrous prophecy. The next words from Moses give a hint that there was something more going on here than a commandment.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.

Deuteronomy 6:6

They are a matter of the heart.

Today, self-love is encouraged. How would that be possible? Doesn't an offering of love take two? Who are those two? If this is just one sub-personality within a person trying to love another sub-personality, it doesn't have much significance. Sometimes, a person's mental process generates a crippling self-criticism. Perhaps if they could get their mind to stop

saying such awful things and think positive, self-affirming thoughts, it would help. But a person deserves a depth of love that is far beyond what the human mind can generate.

True self-love—a love that deeply satisfies the human soul—begins with the realization that we are already being loved. When that love is received, it is natural to love back—to love the Lord our God with all. And in that reciprocity, there is a divine intercourse and communion. Heavenly rain enters us. In all the ways we are loved and we love back—with our heart, strength, mind, and soul—we enjoy communion with the Creator and all the powers of Creation. And in that communion, the Creator enters us, and the human being we are blends with that reality. We become an expression and embodiment of the Creator more and more consciously.

From this perspective, we can then love the human being that we are. This is not a love that imprisons us within our human will and tendencies. It is a transcendent, transforming kind of love that cherishes humanity. "For God so loved the world that he gave humanity us." And we begin loving humanity by loving our own human capacities.

This is how love works. It begins with this primal love. When that is in place, it can find expression in all the fields that the Greeks spoke about and more.

Jesus said it this way:

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matthew 22:39

Without primal love in place, it is impossible to love others truly, because without knowing primal love, you are not loving yourself. And

you have no love with which to love another,
only some form of human attraction. As primal
love is in place, there is no special effort required
to love others. The process of loving others is
automatic, at least if we let it be.

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