

# Session 7



A LOVE THAT LASTS  
DISCOVERING AUTHENTIC LOVE

*Nil obstat:* Ben Akers, S.T.L.

*Imprimatur:* Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L., Archbishop of Denver

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Writers: Woodeene Koenig-Bricker, Lucas Pollice, Edward Sri, Sean Dalton

Media/Print Production: Brenda Kraft, Justin Leddick, Kevin Mallory, John Schmidt

Graphic Design: Stacy Innerst, Jane Myers

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### **Augustine Institute**

6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310

Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Information: 303-937-4420

Formed.org



# A LOVE THAT LASTS

## Discovering Authentic Love

### INTRODUCTION

**A Grammy-winning song asks** “What’s love got to do with it?” For a Catholic, the answer is everything. Love is what every human heart desires. It is, as Pope St. John Paul II says, “the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.”

So what’s gone wrong with our culture, where people seek love but so often fail to find the deep, committed relationships they desire?

The problem is that all too often we focus on love that is based on passion and pleasure—love that seeks what it can get rather than what it can give—instead of the total, committed, unconditional, and sacrificial love that God has for us.

When we base our relationships on what’s in it for ourselves, we are living in what is sometimes called *eros*, the passionate love that seeks pleasure in the company of a beloved. This kind of love can feel good at the beginning, but, when the tough times come, it has no lasting foundation.

*Agape love*, on the other hand, is the love that God has for each one of us. It is a total, committed, and unconditional love that centers not on what we can get from the other person, but on what we can give.

We may live in a culture that praises *eros*, but our hearts long for *agape*. If we are ever to find the peace and fulfillment that we all crave, we must learn how God calls us beyond *eros love* to *agape love* to make a sincere gift of ourselves, seeking the highest good of those we love, and making our own wants and needs secondary. Only then will we know true and authentic love.

## THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The essential differences between *eros* and *agape***
- **What it means to love according to God’s plan**
- **Why the only way we can find the love we desire is by living God’s authentic love**
- **The joy and freedom that comes from living *agape*—the love that lasts**
- **The essential characteristics of this authentic love**



## OPENING PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is error, truth;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

—Prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi

*“Love is therefore the  
fundamental and innate  
vocation of every human  
being.”*

— Pope St. John Paul II



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the characteristics of *agape*? Why does *agape* fulfill us in ways that *eros* alone cannot?
2. How has the entertainment industry distorted the meaning of love?
3. What do you think it means that “man cannot fully find himself, except through a sincere gift of himself”?



## CALL TO CONVERSION

*After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:*



**#1** In the video, the presenter encourages us to prayerfully consider how the world's view of love has changed how we look at relationships. In what ways have you been influenced by the world's view of love? How might this have affected your previous (or current) relationships?

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**#2** Think about what a love built on wanting the very best for another person would look like. Take some time now and reflect on how this way of loving would change your relationships with:

- Your spouse (if you have one)
- Your boyfriend/girlfriend (if you have one)
- Your children (if you have them)
- Your friends
- Your co-workers
- Your relatives

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**#3** Reflect on the following quote from Pope Francis about *agape*.

*“Agape, the love of each one of us for the other, from the closest to the furthest, is in fact the only way that Jesus has given us to find the way of salvation and of the Beatitudes.”*

Why do you think Pope Francis says that *agape* is the “only way” to find the way of salvation? How can you live out this in your own life?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

God, my Father,  
may I love you in all things and above all things.  
May I reach the joy which you have prepared  
for me in heaven.  
Nothing is good that is against your will,  
and all that is good comes from your hand.  
Place in my heart a desire to please you  
and fill my mind with thoughts of your love,  
so that I may grow in your wisdom and  
enjoy your peace.

—<http://www.catholic.org/prayers>



## SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

**Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:**



*So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*  
—1 Corinthians 13:13

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### DISCOVERING AUTHENTIC LOVE

**TO ENRICH YOUR CATHOLIC FAITH, VISIT [formed.org](http://formed.org)**

Where you'll find helpful videos, audio presentations, ebooks, and feature films from the most trustworthy presenters in the Catholic world.

**For Further Reading:**

For more in-depth reading, see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *God is Love: CCC 2331*
- *Love as Vocation: CCC 2392*
- *Chastity: CCC 2337–2339*

**Other Resources:**

- *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*  
by USCCB
- Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est* by Pope Benedict XVI
- *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights from St. John Paul II's Love and Responsibility* by Edward Sri