The Four Loves

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF C. S. LEWIS

Clive Staples (C. S.) Lewis was born in Northern Ireland to Albert James Lewis, a solicitor, and Flora Lewis, the daughter of a Church of Ireland clergyman. Growing up, Lewis—who adopted the nickname "Jack" as a young boy—lived with his parents and brother Warren in East Belfast, in a house called Little Lea. Lewis loved spending time in his father's massive library, and he lost his mother to cancer around the age of 10. Lewis entered Oxford University in 1916, but he was soon sent to France to fight in World War I. He was injured in 1918 and thereafter returned to Oxford, where he studied classics, philosophy, and English literature. From 1925–1954, he taught English literature in Oxford's Magdalen College. Though Lewis had been a staunch atheist since his teen years, he became a Christian in 1931 and remained a committed member of the Church of England for the rest of his life. During World War II, he delivered a series of radio addresses that became the basis for his famous work of apologetics, *Mere Christianity*. In 1954, Lewis became Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University's Magdalene College. Later in life, Lewis married Joy Davidman Gresham, an American woman with whom he had corresponded. She died just a few years later, in 1960, and Lewis followed her in 1963.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Lewis's Christian background plays a central role *The Four Loves*. Lewis touches on a number of core Christian beliefs throughout the book, especially the Trinity (the Christian belief that God is eternally One in Three distinct Persons) and the Incarnation (the belief that Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, is both fully human and fully divine). These beliefs are key to his understanding of love, since he views God as eternally self-giving Love (in Trinitarian form) and Christ as the embodiment of Love (suggesting that human loves are themselves called to be both human and divine). Since Lewis's ideas are steeped in earlier Christian thinkers dating back to the first century B.C.E., and he assumes a broadly Christian readership, this theological backdrop should be kept in mind when considering his ideas about love.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

In *The Four Loves*, Lewis alludes to many classical writings, such as Plato's *Symposium* (which includes an extended exploration of the nature of love), Cicero's *Amicitia* (a treatise on friendship), and Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* (which discusses the pursuit of virtue, with friendship a key part of this). Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which deeply influenced Lewis, is all about the soul's journey to union with Divine Love. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* explores the Christian life, including the practice of virtues like love, more broadly. His novel *Till We Have Faces* explores differences between earthly and divine love. A protégé of Lewis's, Sheldon Vanauken, published an autobiographical book titled *A Severe Mercy* (1977), which describes how his love for his wife was transformed from a "pagan" love to a "Christian" one after their conversions, under Lewis's influence.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Four Loves
- **When Written:** 1958–1960
- **Where Written:** United Kingdom
- **When Published:** 1960
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Nonfiction, Philosophy, Christian Theology

EXTRA CREDIT

Prudish Reception. In 1958, the BBC recorded a 10-part radio series in which Lewis discussed his ideas on the four loves. At the time, the talks—sponsored by the Episcopal Church in the United States—were considered too obscene for radio, especially the parts about sexual love. Lewis subsequently revised and expanded this material into the book *The Four Loves*, which was published two years later.

The Path to Joy. *The Four Loves* is dedicated to Chad Walsh, an American poet and scholar. After corresponding with Lewis in the 1940s, Walsh published *C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics*. American writer Joy Gresham Davidman was introduced to Lewis's writings through Walsh's book. Davidman became Lewis's correspondent herself, and in 1956, she became his wife.

PLOT SUMMARY

When Lewis first set out to write about love, his thesis was "God is love" (as St. John writes in the Bible). Therefore, he divided natural human loves into two types—Gift-love (which is God-like, because God is self-giving) and Need-love (which is unlike God, because God lacks nothing). Based on this distinction, Lewis planned to praise Gift-love and criticize Need-love. However, he soon realized that things are more

complicated. For one thing, human beings never lose their need for God, and this is the way God intends it to be.

Lewis expands on the ideas of likeness and nearness to God—they aren't the same thing. "Likeness" to God is something given, by virtue of the fact that human beings are God's creatures. "Nearness" to God, on the other hand, is a spiritual quality that a person must actively seek. This distinction is important because human Gift-loves (those that already resemble God) can come to be mistaken for divine love. When that happens, those loves become "demonic," self-destructive, and damaging to others. Thus, loves that are "like" God can encourage "nearness" to God as well, but they can also hinder it.

Before discussing "higher" loves, Lewis begins with likings, or pleasures. Pleasures can be divided into Need-pleasures (like a drink of water for someone who's thirsty) and Pleasures of Appreciation (like the sudden smell of flowers). The first must be preceded by a need, while the second doesn't require preparation. A Need-pleasure loses its appeal once it's satisfied, while the object of an Appreciative pleasure is enjoyed for its own sake, separate from the person enjoying it. Pleasures of Appreciation foreshadow Appreciative Love, which simply delights in a beloved person. Need-love, Gift-love, and Appreciative Love generally mix together.

After discussing these three elements of love, Lewis begins to discuss four broader types of love. The first is Affection—for example, the natural bond between mother and child. Affection also applies to the humble, familiar bond between members of families, schools, and other environments where very different people are "thrown together." But Affection has its dangers. People can be insatiable in their need for others' affection; they can also use familiarity as an excuse for cruelty. Even when Affection is offered as a Gift-love, it can be perverted if a person wants the object of their love to receive only the good that *they* can give. When a person tries to live on Affection in this way, the Affection itself fuels only grievance, resentment, and even hate. It will eventually "go bad."

The second broad type of love Lewis discusses is Friendship. Though the ancients prized Friendship, Lewis argues that it's largely disregarded today. This is partly because people in past centuries valued Friendship's transcendent aspect (it lacks the "worldly" instincts of Affection or Eros). Today, however, Romanticism has sentimentalized Friendship and allowed Eros to push it to the margins of most people's lives. Yet in Lewis's view, Friendship is distinct from Eros because Friends focus on a shared interest (instead of focusing on each other), and because Friendship flourishes more, not less, as more people join a circle of Friends. This is because no single Friend can bring out every facet of another person, so we treasure a friend more as we share that person with a greater number of people. Appreciative Love develops as Friends pursue common goals or interests together over time, and mutual trust and admiration deepen. Friendship's major danger is pride. Friends can begin to overlook and even scorn outsiders, and a friendship can become nothing more than a "mutual admiration society" that cares about nothing but its own exclusivity.

Next Lewis discusses Eros, the state of being in love. Eros is more than physical sexuality (what Lewis calls "Venus"), though that's part of it. At its best, Eros transforms a Need-pleasure (for sex) into an Appreciative Pleasure (seeing the beloved as intrinsically desirable, beyond anything they give). However, Lewis doesn't downplay "Venus"—in fact, he argues that the Bible sees *neglect* of Venus as a greater danger than its enjoyment. In his view, modern people have a joyless attitude about sex, failing to see that in addition to its spiritual meanings and emotional gravity, there's also something playful about sex. If the playful element is missed, people risk viewing the symbolism of sex in a blasphemous way (that is, interpreting the different roles of male and female too inflexibly). At its best, Eros exemplifies the free generosity we should offer to God and others. When it becomes "demonic," however, Eros justifies all kinds of evil behavior, as people rationalize that anything is permissible "for love's sake." Clearly, like Affection and Friendship, Eros must be ruled by a higher form of love.

The whole point of *The Four Loves* is that natural human loves are not enough—they point to a higher glory. And without the help of God's grace, they even fall short of that function. In past ages, people worried more about human loves as potential rivals to the love of God. That is, it was viewed as unsafe to give one's heart to anything less than God. But Lewis suggests that love is never safe. The only way to avoid heartbreak is to never love at all.

Moreover, the risk of love isn't loving another person "too much," but of loving God too little. And it's not a matter of intensity of feeling—it's a matter of what a person chooses to put first. In other words, if another person presents an obstacle to obeying God, then that person must be rejected.

Lewis's last point about love is how human loves relate to divine loves. God, who is Love, puts both Gift-love and Need-love into people. In addition to these natural loves, God can also give two supernatural gifts. The first is a share of his own Gift-love, which always wants what's best for the beloved and can even love those who aren't naturally loveable. The second is a Gift-love toward Himself. Such supernatural love is called Charity. God can also turn our Need-love for Him and others into a supernatural form. Supernatural Need-love makes human beings realize their worth through dependence on God; it also enables them to receive Gift-love from others, even though they aren't naturally loveable.

Sometimes, people are called to renounce natural loves. But more often, God allows natural loves to continue while continually transforming them into Charity, instruments of divine love. This happens through the daily practice of virtues—like tolerating and forgiving petty annoyances. Only

loves that have been transformed like this—loves that have, in a sense, shared in Christ's death and resurrection—can make it into the Kingdom of Heaven. Ultimately, turning away from natural loves to divine love isn't turning to something new and strange. Lewis suggests that all that's good and true about earthly loves is from God. So, when a human being finally sees God, they'll realize they've been loving God all along. There's also a third supernatural gift that falls under the heading of Charity—supernatural Appreciative Love for God. This love, the "true centre of all [...] life," is so lofty that Lewis doesn't dare try to describe it, and so ends his book here.

CHARACTERS

Lewis – C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) was a British literature professor and Christian apologist who wrote *The Four Loves*. Though *The Four Loves* is about the different forms of human love, it's also about how these earthly loves should ideally be rooted in a love of God above all else. The book is, in this way, reflective of Lewis's personal religious beliefs. Raised as a member of the Church of Ireland, Lewis became an atheist at 15 but returned to Christianity while teaching at Oxford University, influenced in part by debates he had with his Christian friend and colleague J. R. R. Tolkien. In the 1931, Lewis officially converted to Christianity and became a member of the Church of England. His beliefs were underpinned by orthodox Anglican theology, though in his apologist writings like *The Four Loves*, he tried to keep his arguments nondenominational in order to appeal to a wide audience. Lewis's broad interests in classics and philosophy are also evident in *The Four Loves*, as he references medieval literature and ancient philosophy to support his theological arguments about love.

Mrs. Fidget – Lewis uses Mrs. Fidget as an example of distorted Gift-love. He describes her as a recently deceased woman whose family has been much happier since she died. Mrs. Fidget used to live for her family—making all their meals, waiting up for them at night, and generally fussing over them—even though her family begged her not to. He says that Mrs. Fidget's kind of Gift-love is perverted because it wants the beloved to receive the gifts that only *she* can give; it "needs to be needed." In contrast, divine Gift-love wants what's best for the beloved, regardless of who gives it.

TERMS

Gift-love – Gift-love is one of the three elements of love that **Lewis** identifies (along with Need-love and Appreciative Love). Lewis defines Gift-love as simple self-giving—for example, a father working hard to provide for a family he knows will outlive him. In this respect, Gift-love resembles God's love. However, like the other natural loves, it can become perverted. For instance, a lover may want the beloved to have the gifts only *they* can provide. When God's grace helps transform natural Gift-love into divine Gift-love, this love increasingly desires what's best for the beloved—regardless of who gives it.

Need-love – Need-love is one of the three elements of love that **Lewis** identifies (along with Gift-love and Appreciative Love). Lewis defines Need-love as the kind of love that a child has for its mother and also the kind of dependent love that human beings have for God. In that sense, it least resembles God himself (since God lacks nothing). Like the other natural loves, it can become perverted. For instance, a lover might make a beloved feel guilty for failing to reciprocate Need-love. Or, needing to be needed, they might invent new "needs" to fulfill. When God's grace helps transform natural Need-love into divine Need-love, this love is expressed in total, willing dependence on God and receptiveness to unearned love from others.

Appreciative Love – Appreciative Love is one of the three elements of love that **Lewis** identifies (along with Gift-love and Need-love). Lewis defines Appreciative Love as simple delight in the beloved, regardless of what the person can give in return. A good example is Eros, particularly when it goes beyond just sexual desire to become a delighted appreciation for the whole person. Appreciative Love can be perverted when, as in an exclusive circle of Friendship, mutual admiration stifles regard for (and even promotes prejudice against) anyone outside the circle.

Affection – Affection (in Greek, *storge*) is one of the four broad types of love **Lewis** identifies. Lewis calls Affection the humblest and least discriminating form of love; human beings have it in common with animals. It's best exemplified by the love between parents and offspring. It also characterizes the love between people who are "thrown together" in a family, school, or other group; it often develops quietly due to proximity and familiarity.

Friendship – Friendship (*philia* in Greek) is one of the four broad types of love **Lewis** discusses. Lewis critiques modern people's relative disregard for Friendship, arguing that in the ancient world, friendship was prized because of its otherworldly character (meaning that it's selective and therefore "unnatural," not instinctive). In modern times, however, Friendship tends to be downplayed compared to Eros, or else people suspect deep friendships of having a sexual undertone. Lewis calls Friendship the most generous form of love because (unlike Eros, which thrives between two people) a Friendship grows richer the more people are welcomed into it. Lewis also distinguishes Friendship from Eros in that Friendship is usually "about" something else—friends gazing together at a shared interest or pursuit instead of (as in Eros) gazing at each other.

Eros – Eros is one of the four broad types of love **Lewis** discusses. Eros is defined as the state of being *in* love. It includes sexual love (which Lewis calls "Venus"), but it's also more than that. Sex can exist outside of Eros, and Eros isn't always sensual. Most of the time, sexual love is an important part of Eros, but at its best, Eros is a desire for a particular person as a whole and not just the pleasure that person can give. Lewis suggests that although Eros is solemnly spiritual in some respects, modern people actually take Eros too seriously, ignoring its inherently playfulness.

Charity – Charity is one of the four broad types of love **Lewis** discusses. Simply put, Charity is divine love. Lewis explains that God calls human beings' natural loves to become "modes of Charity" while also remaining themselves. This can only happen when God bestows divine gifts—a share of his own Gift-love (which enables people to desire what's best for a beloved, and also to love the unlovable) as well as a supernatural Need-love. Most often, natural loves are transformed into Charity not instantaneously, but through a gradual, lifelong process of practicing virtue (for example, learning to forgive others). Lewis adds that there's also a supernatural form of Appreciative Love toward God, the most desirable gift of all, but that this lofty form is beyond the scope of his book.

THEMES

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ELEMENTS OF LOVE

In his exploration of the role of love in a Christian's life, Lewis discusses four broad categories of love: Affection (basic fondness), Friendship, Eros (romantic and sexual love), and Charity (divine love). He also introduces three *elements* of love, which he calls Need-love, Gift-love, and Appreciative love. These three natural elements of love are present within each of the Four Loves, usually blended together in varying combinations. Each natural element, while God-given, can either lead a person closer to God or away from God. Left to themselves, the natural loves tend to become distorted and to lead away from God; but if transformed by God's grace into a supernatural form (which Lewis calls Charity), they will last beyond the natural world and enter Heaven. In that sense, Lewis argues, natural loves are ambivalent—they can bring a person closer to God or farther away.

Lewis describes three basic, overlapping elements of love, which he calls Need-love, Gift-love, and Appreciative Love. Need-love is, in some ways, love's most basic or primitive from—like a baby's love for its mother. Though such love is eventually outgrown, Need-love also characterizes a human being's never-ending dependence on God. Second, there's Gift-love, which is simply self-giving. Gift-love can overlap with Need-love. For example, a mother also *needs* to give birth to or nurse a child, because if she doesn't give these gifts of life and nourishment, she herself will suffer or die. At its most generous, Gift-love most closely reflects God's own love. Finally, Lewis describes appreciative love, which simply delights in the beloved regardless of what can be gained from them. For instance, Eros can transform Need-love (the desire for sexual satisfaction) into Appreciative love (the desire for the beloved as a whole person, apart from whatever satisfactions they can give). So, although these three natural elements of love are distinct, they're also intertwined with one another and with the four broad categories of love.

Having differentiated and described these basic elements, Lewis argues that natural loves are ambivalent—in other words, that they can be either good or bad. Unchecked Need-love, for example, can be suffocating for a beloved person—in this way, it can lead the person with unchecked Need-love farther from God. But at the same time, in the human-divine relationship, Need-love is a healthy dependence on God that a person never outgrows. This good kind of need-love brings one closer to God. Likewise, Gift-love can be good or bad. While Gift-love closely mirrors the way God loves humankind, it can also be expressed in obsessive, smothering ways that only gratify the giver—again, leading that person farther from God. Another example is that Appreciative Love, as expressed in Friendship, can either promote greater goodness in people or deepen their vices. For example, a group of friends, through mutual Appreciation, can become entrenched in wicked practices or views just as readily as good ones. In these ways, the natural loves can either enrich a person's life or lead them astray.

Given that ambivalent natural loves can lead away from God as easily as toward Him, Lewis argues that for love to achieve its highest form, it must be transformed through divine grace to become supernatural love (Charity). In addition to the natural loves, Lewis explains, God gives two gifts. The first is a share of divine Gift-love, which differs from natural Gift-love in two ways: it always wants what's best for the beloved, and it's able to love the unlovable, not just the naturally attractive. Paradoxically, God also enables people to have a Gift-love toward God Himself, though God technically needs nothing. The second divine gift is a supernatural Need-love both for God and for others. Such Need-love is, in the first place, a recognition of our constant, utter dependence on God. In the second place, it enables us to receive undeserved, unearned love from others (which is sometimes harder than giving it).

Ultimately, Lewis argues, this transformation of natural loves into divine love is necessary because people are created to love

God above all. When people love earthly things, they do so because, whether they realize it or not, those earthly things reflect God in some way. So, when people's natural loves are transformed, refined from any natural elements, people are not turning to something new and unfamiliar. They are coming to recognize that they've *always* known and loved God in some sense, and that everything they've loved really came from God in the first place.

HUMANITY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Though Lewis argues that love always comes from God in some sense, the precise relationship between human and divine love is complicated. To explain this relationship, Lewis distinguishes "likeness to God" from "nearness to God." All created things, especially humans, are "like" God in the sense that God made them. Nearness to God, on the other hand, has to do with growing closer to God spiritually, in one's character. Likeness is given by God, while nearness must be actively sought. And while *likeness* to God might coincide with nearness to God, that's not always the case—one can be like God but not near Him. The distinction is necessary because when people's understanding of love gets off balance, they can begin to deify love itself instead of worshiping God as the source of love. When that happens, no matter how genuine these loves are otherwise, they become "demonic," hindering nearness to God. When that happens, only God's grace can overcome the divide. Using this distinction between likeness to God and nearness of approach, Lewis argues that while natural loves *can* promote nearness of approach to God, they can also hinder that approach. And because of this, natural loves aren't, by themselves, enough to achieve nearness to God—both human effort and divine grace must transform natural loves.

Mistaking "likeness" to God for "nearness" actually hinders a person's nearness to God. When natural human loves resemble God's love the most, people can mistakenly assume that this "likeness" is also "nearness." In other words, people assume that when love looks Godlike, that means the lover really *is* near God spiritually. For example, a wife and mother who untiringly serves her family might *seem* to be near God, since God, too, is self-giving in His character. However, even though such love *does* resemble God in a sense, it doesn't mean the lover is necessarily *near* God—her motivations might be deeply selfish (for example, she might be gratifying her own need to feel needed). The same could be said of a romantic lover who gives up everything to be with his beloved; such self-sacrifice can appear God-like, but it might also result in the betrayal or neglect of others in his life. In both cases, the person loving is actually moving farther away from God, even though their actions superficially resemble Him.

When a person's nearness to God is hindered in this way, their understanding of love is further distorted as that love deteriorates into a "demonic" state—that is, a state completely opposed to God. When people give their loves the devotion they really owe to God, those loves become "demonic" instead of Godlike. That is, these loves become distortions of themselves that conceal God, or give a false view of God, instead of drawing people closer to Him. To give an extreme example, a pair of thwarted lovers could make a suicide pact because they don't want to live without each other. Though the lovers might feel they're sacrificing everything for love, they've actually let love become a cruel tyrant in their lives instead of a means of approaching God. So even the loves that appear to be outwardly Godlike can end up hindering nearness to God. By leading people into destructive actions, they can even push people farther away from God.

Unless aided by divine grace, natural loves will always tend to unravel in this way, showing that by themselves, they aren't enough to bring a person near God. To resist that demonic tendency, they require not just human effort, but divine grace. Because God created human beings for Himself and wants them to be near Him, He gives grace (the gift of divine help) to transform their distorted loves into divine love. Lewis uses the symbol of a **garden** to illustrate this cooperation between human effort and divine grace. He explains that "without rain, light, and heat descending from the sky, [the gardener] could do nothing […] he has merely encouraged here and discouraged there […] But his share, though small, is indispensable and laborious." In other words, God's grace (the heaven-sent rain and light) empower human efforts and make them effective. Yet if the human gardener didn't "encourage and discourage" (by "pruning" and "weeding" his loves), the garden would still grow wild. But when grace and human effort work together, with God's grace fueling the person's small, daily efforts at taming and directing his natural loves toward God, the garden is gloriously transformed over time. The transformed garden symbolizes the person whose loves don't just resemble God outwardly, but truly reflect God's nearness.

DISPROPORTIONATE LOVE

As Lewis explains in his discussion of likeness versus nearness to God, loves can become perverted, hindering a person's ability to actually approach God. When natural loves are properly balanced with love of God, they can continue to be enjoyed. But when love grows "inordinate," or out of balance, that's when it becomes demonic, and the original love ends up being lost in the process. For example, unchecked Affection can begin to suffocate those it serves, the exclusiveness of Friendship can degenerate into pride, and the self-giving of Eros, when feeling fades, can be reduced to just sex. These are all examples of ways that natural loves can become "demonic" and ultimately destroy themselves. Lewis argues that love is perverted not necessarily when someone loves "too much," but when a natural love is too

big *in proportion to* our love for God. That is, when love for God is smaller than natural loves, natural loves become distorted and finally destroy themselves. Natural loves must therefore be properly positioned in relation to God.

Lewis argues that any form of natural love can become "inordinate," or out of balance. For example, when Affection is thrown out of balance, it can become stifling for its objects. If a professor is *too* giving to a student, it might actually harm the student by preventing them from gaining confidence and thinking independently. This shows that Affection can actually become "demonic." In the case of Friendship, Lewis suggests that when a Friendship ceases to be "about" something else—a shared passion or pursuit—a group of friends can become pridefully exclusive, focused on keeping others out. Even if a group of friends bonds over common loyalty to a sports team, for instance, they can become more focused on hating fans of a rival team than enjoying their original interest. So, Friendship, too, can be fatally distorted, no longer fulfilling its potential to forge bonds between people. Another example is Eros, which becomes demonic when it becomes a justification for any kind of behavior. This occurs when romance is elevated so highly that a person abandons their obligations or even commits crimes for the beloved's sake, believing love makes it all worth it. In reality, love has become destructive.

However, Lewis argues that in all such cases, the problem with inordinate love isn't that the beloved is loved "too much." Rather, God is loved too *little* in proportion to the lesser object. This point hasn't always been clearly understood—in earlier writings, Christian theologians tended to see natural loves as risky because they easily become excessive. For example, St. Augustine wrote that when his best friend died, he learned that it's wrong to give one's heart to anything less than God. Lewis argues that this approach is wrong, however—it's pagan, not Christian. For one thing, it doesn't reflect the attitude of Christ Himself, who wept over the deaths of those he loved. For another, it's not possible to love at *all* without becoming vulnerable to heartbreak. If you try, your heart will just become hard and incapable of love.

In fact, the problem with inordinate love isn't that it's somehow "too much"—it's that such love is disproportionate. This means that, contrary to older views like Augustine's, a person doesn't need to love others less, but to love God *more*. And loving God "more" isn't so much about the intensity of one's feelings—it's about what one chooses to put first. This is what Jesus meant in the Gospels when he said that if a person wants to follow Him, they must hate their family. He didn't mean to literally despise them, but to turn away from anyone—no matter how beloved—who becomes an obstacle to one's first allegiance to God. For example, if someone's friend tries to persuade them to steal, or if a married person falls in love with someone else, the person must turn away from the loves in question and toward God. Though this is a kind of rejection of others, Lewis suggests that because the rejection is for the sake of loving God ("Love Himself"), it's actually a way of loving others more. Ultimately, then, the solution to disproportionate love isn't to love others less. Instead, a person must make sure that when it comes to a choice between a natural love (whether it's for a child, a friend, or a spouse) and loving God by obeying what He commands, God comes first.

TRANSFORMATION OF LOVE

At their very best, natural human loves can become "glorious images of Divine love"—earthly reflections that show what God is like. But the ultimate point of Lewis's book is to show that, by themselves, natural loves aren't enough. People can sense that even their warmest Affection, most devoted Friendship, or most passionate Eros aren't enough; they need something more than mere feeling in order to sustain them. In the end, this "something more" isn't just common sense or human goodness; natural loves can only be transformed through divine grace. Sometimes a person is called to renounce a natural love once and for all (like the biblical Abraham leaving his homeland) in order to love God instead, but more typically, the transformation is gradual over the course of a person's life. Lewis argues that rather than being wiped out, natural loves must be continually transformed by God's grace—that is, taken up into God's love and made instruments of that love (Charity). When natural loves are transformed in this way, human beings will discover that all their loves are, in a certain sense, love for God.

Lewis argues that the natural loves, while they have the potential to reflect God's love, are not enough to actually bring people near to God. For example, Affection, when expressed as Need-love, will keep inventing more and more "needs" to fulfill for the beloved, pretending to be unselfish while actually satisfying the lover's own need to feel useful. While this outwardly looks selfless, it actually demonstrates that natural Affection will devolve into selfishness unless it's somehow transformed. Similarly, Eros *can* be an image of the totally generous love we should offer to God and other people. However, when passionate feelings fade, romance becomes difficult to sustain. These caveats aren't meant to denigrate the natural loves. Natural loves are divine gifts, meant to bring people near to God—but they can't accomplish this by themselves.

Ultimately, Lewis argues, no human effort can turn natural loves into supernatural loves—divine grace must do this. Occasionally, a person must totally renounce natural loves in order to draw near to God. For example, in the Book of Genesis, God calls Abraham to leave behind his family and homeland. Before the modern era, this was the more common understanding—that natural loves must be given up entirely, or else they risk becoming rivals to one's love for God. However, most of the time, God doesn't call people to give up natural

loves or even substitute His own love for them. Instead, he calls on those natural loves to "become modes of Charity" (divine love) while simultaneously remaining themselves. This means that God lets people continue loving children or friends or spouses, but He puts circumstances in a person's life that gradually purify that love, turning it into Charity.

Lewis argues that divine grace takes up natural loves and transforms them into Charity, or divine love. In other words, God changes natural loves from human to divine over the course of a person's life, until those loves are suitable for Heaven (where only divine things can exist). Most of the time, this transformation of natural loves isn't sudden or obvious, but subtle, gradual, and secret. It generally occurs by practicing virtue, which simply means responding to the events of everyday life—even petty annoyances—with patience, tolerance, and forgiveness. When a person develops virtues like these, they gradually purge their natural loves of self-indulgent, sinful, and worldly elements. These loves are accordingly changed and strengthened, with God's help, into divine loves. For example, Affection will no longer wear itself out by self-indulgently giving what the lover *wants* to give. Instead, it will seek what's truly good for its object—even if somebody else is better positioned to give that good thing. In this case, Affection has been made an instrument of Charity (the natural love becoming divine). The end result of this lifelong, plodding, often painful effort is that anything that remains natural in human love will fade away, leaving only divine love—or Charity. The parts of love that have been transformed into Charity will last for eternity in Heaven.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

GARDEN

In his chapter on Charity, Lewis compares love to a garden. He uses this symbol to explain that for human love to change from its natural form into Charity (divine love), it needs both God's grace (freely given divine gifts) and human effort. He says that, like a garden, love requires constant tending—weeding out those natural elements of love and pruning the disproportionate bits that threaten to choke divine love or stunt its growth. The garden also needs the "rain" of God's grace in order to thrive. Both human and divine contributions are necessary. When a garden is in full bloom, the gardener's (human) efforts appear small compared to what nature (that is, God) has done, but that doesn't mean those efforts are dispensable. Presumably, without them, the garden would have run wild, and it wouldn't have been as fruitful or beautiful.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the HarperOne edition of *The Four Loves* published in 2017.

Chapter 1 Quotes

'God is love,' says St John. When I first tried to write this book I thought that his maxim would provide me with a very plain highroad through the whole subject. I thought I should be able to say that human loves deserved to be called loves at all just in so far as they resembled that Love which is God. The first distinction I made was therefore between what I called Gift-love and Need-love. The typical example of Gift-love would be that love which moves a man to work and plan and save for the future well-being of his family which he will die without sharing or seeing; of the second, that which sends a lonely or frightened child to its mother's arms.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

With these opening sentences, C.S. Lewis describes his original intentions for *The Four Loves*. He starts with a quote from the New Testament book of First John, believed to have been written by Jesus's follower and close friend, the apostle John. In the historic King James Version, the quote reads, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Based on this quote, Lewis intended to argue that only loves that resemble God (from whom all love originates) are truly loves at all.

So, Lewis initially distinguishes between what he calls Gift-love and Need-love. Gift-love is unselfish, caring for others regardless of whether the lover will benefit personally. Implicitly, this type of love is like God. Need-love, on the other hand, is more primitive or childlike, focused on what the lover will receive from the beloved. Lewis implies that this is unlike God.

The belief that "God is love" remains the guiding principle for Lewis's book. However, he later acknowledges another element of love (Appreciative Love). He also changes his mind about Need-love, concluding that even though it doesn't resemble God (who has no needs), it's actually a valid, even healthy, form of love—especially if a Christian is directing Need-love toward God. Overall, though Lewis maintains some of his original terminology, he quickly acknowledges that love is more complex than his categories

initially suggested.

Every Christian would agree that a man's spiritual health is exactly proportional to his love for God. But man's love for God, from the very nature of the case, must always be very largely and must often be entirely, a Need-love. This is obvious when we implore forgiveness for our sins or support in our tribulations. But in the long run it is perhaps even more apparent in our growing—for it ought to be growing—awareness that our whole being by its very nature is one vast need; incomplete, preparatory, empty yet cluttered, crying out for Him who can untie things that are now knotted together and tie up things that are still dangling loose. […] He addresses our Need-love: 'Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy-laden,' or, in the Old Testament, 'Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.'

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

The Four Loves is written by a Christian thinker to fellow Christians, and this shapes the categories of love that Lewis defines. Here, in discussing a Christian's love for God, Lewis develops his argument that Need-love isn't necessarily a selfish or immature form of love. In fact, love for God is almost always Need-love. This is because of the disparity between God and humans—humans are weak and dependent, while God is all-powerful, the only being able to forgive and help people.

Although this is a basic Christian concept, Lewis suggests that Christians understand it more profoundly over the course of their lives, as their Need-love doesn't fade, but rather grows deeper. That is, as Christians recognize their inherent neediness—their messy and unfinished nature—their Need-love becomes more apparent to them. What's more, God understands this Need-love and even invites it. Lewis demonstrates this by citing two Bible verses: Christ's appeal to burdened sinners in the Gospel of Matthew and a line from Psalm 81, reminding the people of Israel that God provides for them.

What is near Him by likeness is never, by that fact alone, going to be any nearer. But nearness of approach is, by definition, increasing nearness. And whereas the likeness is given to us—and can be received with or without thanks, can be used or abused—the approach, however initiated and supported by Grace, is something we must do. […] Hence […] our imitation of God in this life—that is, our willed imitation as distinct from any of the likenesses which He has impressed upon our natures or states—must be an imitation of God incarnate: our model is the Jesus, not only of Calvary but of the workshop, the roads, the crowds, the clamorous demands and surly oppositions, the lack of all peace and privacy, the interruptions. For this, so strangely unlike anything we can attribute to the Divine life in itself, is apparently not only like, but is, the Divine life operating under human conditions.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Lewis distinguishes between his concepts of likeness and nearness to God. According to his definition, "likeness" to God is a static quality—that is, it doesn't change. It simply means that a creature is like its creator in some way. This quality doesn't, by itself, require that the creature be "near" God in a moral or spiritual sense. "Nearness," on the other hand, means that the person is actively, by their own initiative, drawing closer to God.

Here, Lewis suggests that this approach to God happens by imitating Jesus. To understand this idea, it's important to understand the Christian theological belief in Jesus as God Incarnate—that is, Jesus is understood to be both God and man. Lewis acknowledges the paradoxical nature of this belief: God is believed to be eternally changeless. Yet Jesus, during his earthly existence, was jostled by all the demands of ordinary human life. Lewis implies that this paradox applies to the person who seeks nearness to God, too. The process of approach to God isn't about avoiding life's pain and difficulty but learning to imitate God's character in the midst of those things. Lewis upholds Jesus as the perfect model of this.

Every human love, at its height, has a tendency to claim for itself a divine authority. Its voice tends to sound as if it were the will of God Himself. It tells us not to count the cost, it demands of us a total commitment, it attempts to over-ride all other claims and insinuates that any action which is sincerely done 'for love's sake' is thereby lawful and even meritorious. That erotic love and love of one's country may thus attempt to 'become gods' is generally recognised. But family affection may do the same.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

One of the main points of Lewis's book is to distinguish between human (or natural) loves and divine loves. Here, he suggests that when human loves grow to a certain point, they risk being mistaken for divine. They resemble God so much that it's easy to assume they are actually God's will. When a person obeys God, they must be completely dedicated to God's will and not let anything else come first. This, Lewis suggests, is what happens when a person equates a particular love with God's will—a person starts to believe that anything they do "for love's sake" must not only be acceptable, but righteous. Obviously, if a person *has* improperly conflated human and divine love, this belief is dangerous and destructive.

Lewis observes that erotic love (romantic/sexual love) and patriotism have often been deified in this way. It's less commonly recognized that a love as seemingly benign as family affection can be distorted in the same way. Lewis will spend the rest of the book unpacking his claim that human and divine loves shouldn't be conflated, and he'll expound on the specific ways that each category of love (Affection, Friendship, and Eros) can be distorted.

Chapter 2 Quotes

This love, when it sets up as a religion, is beginning to be a god—therefore to be a demon. And demons never keep their promises. Nature 'dies' on those who try to live for a love of nature. Coleridge ended by being insensible to her; Wordsworth, by lamenting that the glory had passed away. Say your prayers in a garden early, ignoring steadfastly the dew, the birds, and the flowers, and you will come away overwhelmed by its freshness and joy; Go there in order to be overwhelmed and [...] nine times out of ten nothing will happen to you.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter 2, Lewis builds up to his discussion of the titular four loves by considering likings and loves for non-human things. These "sub-human" loves have some of the same pitfalls as the higher forms of love he will consider later. One of the most common non-human loves is love of nature.

Throughout the book, Lewis maintains that human loves become distorted, or "demonic," when they are mistaken for divine loves. When this happens, they don't "keep their promises"—that is, they fail to fulfill the divine hopes placed in them, and even their earthly delight is lost. This especially happens when, instead of loving nature as something that can resemble divine glory, people love nature as *itself* an expression of divine glory. For Lewis, as a Christian theologian, this is a critical distinction—the creator should not be conflated with the creation.

Lewis gives the example of praying in a garden. If a person concentrates on their prayers, they will walk away filled with appreciation for nature's God-given beauty. But if they enter the garden seeking an experience of nature's beauty (essentially putting nature in God's place) they will walk away disappointed. Lewis suggests that Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge deified nature in this way. Though this experience is mirrored in many other forms of love, Lewis presents love of nature as a prime example of such a faulty conflation.

As the family offers us the first step beyond self-love, so this offers us the first step beyond family selfishness. Of course it is not pure charity; it involves love of our neighbours in the local, not of our Neighbour, in the Dominical, sense. But those who do not love the fellow-villagers or fellow-townsmen whom they have seen are not likely to have got very far towards loving 'Man' whom they have not.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis considers patriotism as another example of love for something sub-human. He regards patriotism as a complex

phenomenon that can't simply be categorized as good or bad. Here, he considers some of its positive aspects.

At its best, patriotism helps people mature beyond selfishness. Love for family helps a person grow beyond self-absorption. Similarly, patriotism can help someone mature beyond a selfish love for family. Lewis clarifies that he isn't talking about love of neighbor "in the Dominical sense"—referring to the biblical command to love one's neighbor in the sense of humanity in general. Rather, he's talking about loving the specific people who live nearby, and in that sense, it isn't "pure charity"—it isn't devoid of self-interest. But that doesn't mean such love isn't valuable. Lewis suggests that if a person doesn't love the actual people who live in close proximity, they won't progress in their love of humanity in general. In other words, you can't really love humanity in the abstract.

So, patriotism isn't an end in itself, according to Lewis—it's a kind of training for higher forms of love. In that sense, it's subject to dangers and distortions like any other natural love, but it can also be benign and even useful.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ Affection broadens [our minds]; of all natural loves it is the most catholic, the least finical, the broadest. The people with whom you are thrown together in the family, the college, the mess, the ship, the religious house, are from this point of view a wider circle than the friends, however numerous, whom you have made for yourself in the outer world. […] The truly wide taste in humanity will similarly find something to appreciate in the cross-section of humanity whom one has to meet every day. In my experience it is Affection that creates this taste, teaching us first to notice, then to endure, then to smile at, then to enjoy, and finally to appreciate, the people who 'happen to be there'.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis introduces Affection as the first of the four broad categories of love he will discuss. In Lewis's scheme, Affection isn't just a synonym for love; it's a specific kind of fondness, though a very simple one. He describes it as "catholic," which is another way of saying "broad," or universal. It's not fussy or overly picky. Affection tends to take root and grow among people who are "thrown together"—like family, roommates, military comrades, or fellow members of a religious order. One might very well be friends with such people, but not necessarily. In other words, one will likely feel Affection toward all friends, but every object of Affection isn't necessarily a friend. Where Friendship is specific, Affection is much more general.

In contrast to more exclusive and particular forms of love like Friendship and Eros, Affection instills love for many different kinds of people. Even someone whose presence is merely "endured" at first might, over a period of time, become not just tolerated but loved. This generally happens through sheer familiarity and not necessarily because that person was sought out as a friend or lover.

❝ [Gift-love] must work towards its own abdication. We must aim at making ourselves superfluous. […] But the instinct, simply in its own nature, has no power to fulfil this law. The instinct desires the good of its object but not simply; only the good it can itself give. A much higher love—a love which desires the good of the object as such, from whatever source that good comes—must step in and help or tame the instinct before it can make the abdication. And of course it often does. But where it does not, the ravenous need to be needed will gratify itself either by keeping its objects needy or by inventing for them imaginary needs. It will do this all the more ruthlessly because it thinks (in one sense truly) that it is a Gift-love and therefore regards itself as 'unselfish'.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

While it's relatively easy to see how Affection as Need-love can become distorted, Affection as Gift-love can also be distorted. Lewis explains that the object of Gift-love is to keep on giving until the beloved no longer needs you. For example, a parent feeds a child so that someday, the child will be grown up and able to feed themselves.

However, left to its own powers, Gift-love isn't able to be so unselfish. It will instinctually want not simply what's best for the beloved, but only what *it* can give. In that sense, Gift-love can also be a form of Need-love at the same time (it needs to be needed), and it shows how Affection can become "demonic," or distorted.

This is also a good example of natural love's ability to be self-deceptive. When a lover keeps inventing new needs to fulfill

for the beloved in order to feel needed, it's easy for the lover to believe that they're being selfless, because they're giving. The lover misses the fact that they're actually gratifying their own needs. Later, Lewis will describe Charity as that "higher love" that must tame Affection (and the other natural loves) so that it can progress toward the divine instead of falling into the demonic.

Chapter 4 Quotes

To the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. We admit of course that besides a wife and family a man needs a few 'friends'. But the very tone of the admission, and the sort of acquaintanceships which those who make it would describe as 'friendships', show clearly that what they are talking about has very little to do with that *Philia* which Aristotle classified among the virtues or that *Amicitia* on which Cicero wrote a book. It is something quite marginal; not a main course in life's banquet; a diversion; something that fills up the chinks of one's time.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 73

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis spends a lot of time defending Friendship because he sees it as an overlooked form of love in his day. In contrast, ancient writers saw friendship as one of the highest loves, a sort of training-ground for virtue. Lewis particularly mentions Aristotle, who talks about friendship in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Cicero, who devotes a whole treatise (*Amicitia*) to the subject. Both these ancient authors would have been at least somewhat familiar to a university-educated audience in Lewis's day.

No matter their familiarity with ancient views of friendship, however, modern people have demoted it from its former status. Where ancient philosophers saw friendship as one of life's peak experiences, modern people see friendship as something casual, even dispensable. Friends might be useful when someone needs to pass the time, but they serve no purpose beyond that. Lewis will go on to argue that friendship has been devalued because his culture prefers more sentimental expressions of love, and it also cares less about developing virtues than the ancients did. At the same time, he will argue that contrary to the old philosophers, friendship by itself isn't a sufficient goal in life.

This imposes on me at the outset a very tiresome bit of demolition. It has actually become necessary in our time to rebut the theory that every firm and serious friendship is really homosexual.

The dangerous word *really* is here important. To say that every Friendship is consciously and explicitly homosexual would be too obviously false; the wiseacres take refuge in the less palpable charge that it is *really*—unconsciously, cryptically [...] homosexual.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 76

Explanation and Analysis

In this part of his chapter on Friendship, Lewis addresses common modern obstacles to Friendship. In his day, a major one was the suspicion that close same-sex friendships were actually homosexual.

It's important to understand that here, Lewis isn't really commenting on homosexuality either positively or negatively. His main critique is the fact that his culture is so focused on Eros (romantic/sexual love) that it doesn't have much room for the idea of Friendship. In other words, his fellow British are so preoccupied with sex and romance that they're almost uncomfortable with the idea of a close, same-sex friendship that's *devoid* of those elements. In fact, they even reject the idea of friendships that are avowedly non-sexual, suggesting that such relationships must have an unconscious sexual aspect.

Lewis debunks this theory because he thinks that in order to reclaim the importance of Friendship as a form of love, his contemporaries must recognize the value of devoted relationships that aren't based on Eros alone (though Friendship can turn into Eros and presumably vice versa).

Those who cannot conceive Friendship as a substantive love but only as a disguise or elaboration of Eros betray the fact that they have never had a Friend. The rest of us know that though we can have erotic love and friendship for the same person yet in some ways nothing is less like a Friendship than a love-affair. Lovers are always talking to one another about their love; Friends hardly ever about their Friendship. Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; Friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 78

Explanation and Analysis

After dismissing the idea that close friendships should be suspected of being unconsciously homosexual, Lewis further discusses the distinction between Eros and Friendship. He suggests that to anyone who's experienced true friendship, the idea that friendships are disguised Eros is laughable. This is because, in Lewis's view, Eros and Friendship are oriented in different directions. Eros is essentially inward-facing, while friendship is outward-facing. In other words, lovers are mutually absorbed in their love and can't stop talking about it; they can't tear themselves away from each other. On the other hand, friends don't talk much about their friendships. They stand side by side, looking together at a shared passion or pursuit.

With this distinction, Lewis doesn't suggest that lovers literally never look at anything else or that friends never talk about friendship; he's observing general tendencies. Still, it's worth considering that Lewis writes from a certain cultural and class position (a British man of the World War I generation who's spent his career in academia), and that inevitably shapes his perception of what friendship is—a limitation he even acknowledges elsewhere in the book.

> In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald's reaction to a specifically Caroline joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him 'to myself' now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald. Hence true Friendship is the least jealous of loves.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 78

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Lewis considers a unique characteristic of Friendship—its welcoming nature. Unlike other forms of love, particularly Eros, friendship doesn't limit the number of people involved—in fact, Lewis's view could be summed up as "the more the merrier." A group of friends is enriched by a newcomer, not threatened by it.

But Lewis explains this expansive characteristic in terms of individuals. It takes more than a single friend to bring out the best in a person. So, each person can be best appreciated as part of a network of people, each drawing out specific facets of the others that nobody else could. Lewis uses the fictional example of a friendship between himself, "Charles," and "Ronald." If Charles dies, Lewis isn't just affected by the loss of Charles; he also loses those aspects of Ronald that only Charles could elicit ("Ronald's reaction to a specifically Caroline joke"). So, Lewis's and Ronald's friendship is actually diminished rather than bolstered once Charles departs the group. This is why Lewis calls friendship "the least jealous of loves." Unlike Eros, which is best expressed between two lovers and refuses to admit anyone else, Friendship shines best among multiple people and their shared web of memories and interactions.

> A circle of friends cannot of course oppress the outer world as a powerful social class can. But it is subject, on its own scale, to the same danger. It can come to treat as 'outsiders' in a general (and derogatory) sense those who were quite properly outsiders for a particular purpose. Thus, like an aristocracy, it can create around it a vacuum across which no voice will carry. [...] The partial and defensible deafness was based on some kind of superiority—even if it were only a superior knowledge about stamps. The sense of superiority will then get itself attached to the total deafness. The group will disdain as well as ignore those outside it.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 104

Explanation and Analysis

Here Lewis considers a particular distortion of friendship—its prideful exclusivity. He suggests that, on a smaller scale, a group of friends can be as oppressive as an exclusive social class. Groups of friends don't start out this way. In fact, a degree of exclusiveness is appropriate and healthy; friendships form around a shared interest or purpose, so they rightly exclude those who don't share that aim ("those who were [...] outsiders for a particular purpose").

Danger arises, however, when that exclusiveness turns "derogatory." Members develop disdain for outsiders and become "deaf" to their point of view. Lewis says it makes

sense to ignore the perspective of those who don't know about your interest—say, stamps. But after a while, that "deafness" becomes an expression of superiority in its own right—outsiders are ignored not because they don't share your knowledge of stamp-collecting, but *because* they're outsiders. The group of friends then becomes a miniature aristocracy that's proudly insulated from the outside world. The group of friends also loses out, because they're no longer "about" stamps, but "about" themselves and against outsiders. In other words, they've ceased to be a group of friends at all.

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ By Eros I mean of course that state which we call 'being in love'; or, if you prefer, that kind of love which lovers are 'in'. Some readers may have been surprised when, in an earlier chapter, I described Affection as the love in which our experience seems to come closest to that of the animals. Surely, it might be asked, our sexual functions bring us equally close? This is quite true as regards human sexuality in general. But I am not going to be concerned with human sexuality simply as such. Sexuality makes part of our subject only when it becomes an ingredient in the complex state of 'being in love'. That sexual experience can occur without Eros, without being 'in love', and that Eros includes other things besides sexual activity I take for granted.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 117

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis introduces the third of the four loves, Eros. In common usage, this term has strongly sexual connotations (think of the word "erotic"), but Lewis means something more than that. It refers more broadly to the idea of being in love. Sexuality is certainly a part of that, but in Lewis's definition, Eros isn't reducible to sex. It's just one "ingredient" of a state called "being in love."

What's more, sexual experiences can happen where Eros isn't present, and Eros can be sustained with or without sex. Lewis defends this claim later by pointing out that, historically, most marriages took place without a transcendent experience of being "in love" as people understand it today. He also goes on to argue that, supported by divine love, Eros is a strong enough state to endure even when sexual feelings diminish.

Lewis anticipates an objection—that, earlier in the book, he identified Affection as the lowest, most "animal" form of love. Surely Eros would be more fittingly described this way? Lewis grants that sex alone could be described as such, but that isn't what he's concerned with. Well-rounded Eros, which includes sex but isn't dominated by it, is actually a lofty state that potentially draws participants nearer to God.

❝ It has been widely held in the past, and is perhaps held by many unsophisticated people today, that the spiritual danger of Eros arises almost entirely from the carnal element within it; that Eros is 'nobler' or 'purer' when Venus is reduced to the minimum. The older moral theologians certainly seem to have thought that the danger we chiefly had to guard against in marriage was that of a soul-destroying surrender to the senses. It will be noticed, however, that this is not the Scriptural approach. St Paul, dissuading his converts from marriage, says nothing about that side of the matter except to discourage prolonged abstinence from Venus (I Cor. 7:5). [...] With all proper respect to the medieval guides, I cannot help remembering that they were all celibates, and probably did not know what Eros does to our sexuality; how, far from aggravating, [Eros] reduces the nagging and addictive character of mere appetite.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 123

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis continues discussing the relationship between sexuality and Eros. He explains that in the past, and even today, people considered Eros to be somehow contaminated by physical sexuality. Thus, Eros was regarded as better when "Venus," or sex, played only a small part. Even some ancient and medieval Christian theologians took this view (in particular, Lewis seems to have St. Augustine in mind here), teaching that too much sex could weaken marriage's loftier spiritual goals.

However, Lewis argues that this attitude goes against the Bible's teaching. The apostle Paul did advise early Christians to avoid marriage if possible—though he didn't make that argument based on sex, but on the inevitable mundane cares that could distract married people from their devotion to God. He actually warned married couples not to abstain from sex for too long at any given time, suggesting that it's

an important part of marriage.

Though Lewis doesn't explain how celibacy became theologians' preferred view, he implies that a misreading of the Bible is to blame. In any case, because most medieval theologians were celibate, their understanding of Eros was incomplete. Had they been married, they might have known that Eros is bigger than just sex. In fact, Lewis suggests that Eros helps keep sexual desire in its proper place within a marriage, so that sex neither dominates a marriage nor is neglected in it.

> The husband is the head of the wife just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the Church. He is to love her as Christ loved the Church—read on—and gave his life for her (Eph. 5:25). This headship, then, is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion; whose wife receives most and gives least [...] The chrism of this terrible coronation is to be seen not in the joys of any man's marriage but in its sorrows, in the sickness and sufferings of a good wife or the faults of a bad one, in his unwearying (never paraded) care or his inexhaustible forgiveness[.]

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 135

Explanation and Analysis

When Lewis discusses the spiritual symbolism associated with Eros, he pays particular attention to the relationship between husband and wife as described in the Bible: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it[.]" Implicitly, he does this to guard against distortions of the verse. It is crucial for husbands to understand the significance of Christ's love for the Church—like Christ, they must be willing to die for the one they love. In other words, the husband's role as "head" of his marriage isn't something to be triumphal or arrogant about; it's a call for humility and realism about how hard love can be.

That's why Lewis says that headship is "most fully embodied" when a man's marriage is "most like a crucifixion." Whether his wife is dealing with chronic illness requiring his dutiful care, or she is simply difficult to live with, the husband is supposed to be willing to set aside his own desires and serve her without making a big show of it. This kind of self-giving shows how Eros at its best is something much more than just sexual desire.

> Where a true Eros is present, resistance to his commands feels like apostasy, and what are really (by the Christian standard) temptations speak with the voice of duties—quasi-religious duties, acts of pious zeal to Love. He builds his own religion round the lovers. [...]
>
> It seems to sanction all sorts of actions they would not otherwise have dared. I do not mean solely, or chiefly, acts that violate chastity. They are just as likely to be acts of injustice or uncharity against the outer world. They will seem like proofs of piety and zeal towards Eros. The pair can say to one another in an almost sacrificial spirit, 'It is for love's sake that I have neglected my parents—left my children—cheated my partner—failed my friend at his greatest need.'

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 144–145

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Lewis describes what happens when Eros turns "demonic." When Eros becomes an end in itself in people's lives, it essentially becomes a god. It's a demanding god at that—people enthralled by Eros feel like traitors if they dare to go against it. In this situation, Eros demands things of its followers that they wouldn't normally do—not sexual things primarily, but betrayals of other expressions of love. For example, people start to believe they have to neglect or ignore those to whom the owe Affection (like parents or children) and Friendship for Eros's sake. They convince themselves that they've committed these "acts of injustice or uncharity" for a higher purpose.

This is a clear example of Lewis's argument that when one of the natural loves grows dominant in a person's life—becomes "demonic"—it soon proves that it isn't real love at all. Unless it's tempered by divine love, uncontrolled Eros begins to smother other duties and loyalties. And in the end, Eros itself fizzles out.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ And when the garden is in its full glory the gardener's contributions to that glory will still have been in a sense paltry compared with those of nature. Without life springing from the earth, without rain, light and heat descending from the sky, he could do nothing. When he has done all, he has merely encouraged here and discouraged there, powers and beauties that have a different source. But his share, though small, is indispensable and laborious. When God planted a garden He set a man over it and set the man under Himself. When He planted the garden of our nature and caused the flowering, fruiting loves to grow there, He set our will to 'dress' them. Compared with them it is dry and cold. And unless His grace comes down, like the rain and the sunshine, we shall use this tool to little purpose. But its laborious—and largely negative—services are indispensable.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 150

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis uses a garden as a metaphor for natural loves, explaining that if love is to develop as it should, both God and humans have roles to fulfill. In the metaphor, "nature" refers to God, who initially plants the "flowering, fruiting loves" in the human soul and sends rain and light (God's gracious help) to nourish them. When compared, the human contributions don't look very impressive next to God's. That's because a person mostly just weeds and prunes—"[encourages] here and [discourages] there"—the life that only God makes possible in the first place. God's work is overwhelmingly "positive," while the human being's efforts are mostly "negative," keeping the garden from getting disorderly and overgrown. Yet that doesn't mean the person can neglect their share—without it, the garden will essentially stop being a garden (love won't flourish).

Lewis also alludes to the Book of Genesis when he refers to "[setting] a man" over a garden and ordering him to tend, or "dress," it. This was Adam's task after God created the Earth. Lewis suggests that each person has an Adam-like role over the "garden" of his or her God-given nature.

❝ There is no escape along the lines St Augustine suggests. Nor along any other lines. There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 155

Explanation and Analysis

This is one of the best known, most frequently quoted passages in *The Four Loves*. Lewis has just discussed a passage in Augustine's *Confessions* in which Augustine mourned a friend's death and concluded that it's too risky to give one's heart to anything less than God. Now Lewis disagrees with the great theologian, arguing that there's no such thing as love without risk. *Any* human love carries the risk of suffering and heartbreak—even love for a pet (implying that Affection, Friendship, and Eros all carry the same risk). If someone wants to avoid pain, they must avoid love altogether, resorting to distraction and selfish indulgence.

But avoiding love brings its own, implicitly greater, risks. A heart that never breaks becomes hardened, incapable of breaking—essentially dead. Lewis therefore suggests that a person who resists love misses out on what it means to be human. He goes on to assert that such a person certainly cannot draw closer to God and effectively chooses damnation as a result. So ultimately, heartbreak is a nonnegotiable part of what it means to live for God, and indeed to be fully human.

> But the question whether we are loving God or the earthly Beloved 'more' is nor, so far as concerns our Christian duty, a question about the comparative intensity of two feelings. The real question is, which (when the alternative comes) do you serve, or choose, or put first? To which claim does your will, in the last resort, yield?
>
> As so often, Our Lord's own words are both far fiercer and far more tolerable than those of the theologians. He says nothing about guarding against earthly loves for fear we might be hurt; He says something that cracks like a whip about trampling them all under foot the moment they hold us back from following Him.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis has just rejected Augustine's claim that it's wrong to open one's heart to anything less than God. Now he challenges the whole idea that one can love another person "too much"—in Lewis's view, that's not really the problem. The real question in such a case is whether one loves God too little.

In considering this question, one can't really determine the answer based on feelings. Rather, the question is about ultimate loyalty. When under pressure to obey God or continue clinging to a human love, what does a person choose? The answer shows whom they love most.

Lewis alludes to Jesus's words in the Gospel of Luke: "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife . . . and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." He suggests that Christ's stark warning cuts through the ways that people tend to complicate love. Unlike Augustine, Christ doesn't tell anyone to refrain from loving others. On the other hand, he asks something much harder: to be ready to turn away from earthly loves when they impede one's ability to follow Jesus.

> But in everyone, and of course in ourselves, there is that which requires forbearance, tolerance, forgiveness. The necessity of practising these virtues first sets us, forces us, upon the attempt to turn—more strictly, to let God turn—our love into Charity. These frets and rubs are beneficial. It may even be that where there are fewest of them the conversion of natural love is most difficult. When they are plentiful the necessity of rising above it is obvious. To rise above it when it is as fully satisfied and as little impeded as earthly conditions allow—to see that we must rise when all seems so well already—this may require a subtler conversion and a more delicate insight.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis has been arguing that God typically allows people to hang onto their natural loves, but that He requires these loves to be transformed into divine loves. Here, he explains how that transformation occurs. It's not usually though an instantaneous change, though that can happen sometimes. More often, it happens through the practice of virtues—which isn't an abstract thing, but a very ordinary, everyday thing. Lewis describes it as happening most often through daily human interactions, like putting up with a family member's quirks and offenses. As people forgive more and more, their natural loves are slowly, painfully turned (with the help of God's grace) into Charity, or love given freely to the undeserving.

Lewis suggests that these tiresome "frets and rubs" are a good thing, in that they force a person to trust in God and practice virtue. In a smoother relationship, it might actually be harder to turn natural love into Charity, because there are fewer opportunities to practice.

> Man can ascend to Heaven only because the Christ, who died and ascended to Heaven, is [in him]. Must we not suppose that the same is true of a man's loves? Only those into which Love Himself has entered will ascend to Love Himself. And these can be raised with Him only if they have, in some degree and fashion, shared His death; if the natural element in them has submitted—year after year, or in some sudden agony—to transmutation. [...] Natural loves can hope for eternity only in so far as they have allowed themselves to be taken into the eternity of Charity [...] And the process will always involve a kind of death. There is no escape.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 174–175

Explanation and Analysis

This passage is filled with dense theological ideas. Lewis draws on the language of salvation in Christianity, in which Jesus Christ died to redeem people from their sins and then conquered death through his resurrection. People who believe in Christ and are united to him share spiritually in his death and resurrection (though Christian traditions differ over precisely how this happens) and ultimately get to share in his eternal life in Heaven. Here, Lewis suggests that just as people get to Heaven through Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven, the same holds true for human loves. Those loves can only make it to Heaven if they're imbued with Christ's supernatural presence.

This necessarily means that natural loves have to "die" in some sense. Lewis has already discussed how this happens—most often over years of patient effort at virtue, but sometimes through a "sudden agony" like giving up some earthly love entirely. When natural loves die, they are "taken up" into supernatural love, or Charity. What's "resurrected" lasts forever—but getting there requires a painful acceptance of death.

> We were made for God. Only by being in some respect like Him, only by being a manifestation of His beauty, lovingkindness, wisdom, or goodness, has any earthly Beloved excited our love. It is not that we have loved them too much, but that we did not quite understand what we were loving. It is not that we shall be asked to turn from them, so dearly familiar, to a Stranger. When we see the face of God we shall know that we have always known it.

Related Characters: Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 178

Explanation and Analysis

As Lewis draws the book to a close, he touches on some of the deepest mysteries of divine love. Here, he suggests that when natural loves are left behind to be transformed into Charity (the kind of love that lasts for eternity), that doesn't mean losing something. This claim is rooted in Lewis's beliefs about the relationship between human beings and God. God made humans for himself, and he put some aspect of His character—like "beauty [...] wisdom, or goodness"—into each person He made. So, when we love another person, we're drawn by some manifestation of who God is, even if we don't realize it. Those small expressions of God's character, because of their divine origin, are never lost.

In that sense, leaving behind natural loves to embrace divine Charity is simply a process of fulfilling God's original intentions for humanity. As people learn to love God preeminently, they don't love other human beings *less*; it's more that they love them properly for the first time (that is, as fellow creatures of a common divine Creator). And when they finally draw near to God in Heaven, they will discover a Being whom, in a sense, they have known all along.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When C.S. Lewis first set out to write this book, he planned for his thesis to be St. John's statement that "God is love." Based on this, he intended to say that human loves are only "loves" when they reflect the "Love which is God." He therefore drew a distinction between what he called "Gift-love" and "Need-love." "Gift-love" is the kind that moves someone to work hard for the well-being of a family who will outlive them. "Need-love" is the kind that sends a helpless child into a mother's arms.

Lewis opens the book by explaining his original intentions for writing. He was inspired by a biblical quote: 1 John 4:16, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (King James Version). From this, Lewis reasoned that if "God is love," then human loves rightly reflect that divine love.

According to this scheme, Gift-love is obviously more like God. After all, God the Father gives Himself to the Son, and the Son gives Himself back to the Father and to the world. By contrast, Need-love cannot be like God, because God lacks nothing. On this basis, Lewis planned to write in praise of the first kind of love and to criticize the second.

Lewis's discussion of Gift-love as "like God" is based on Christian belief in the Trinity—that God is one divine Being in three equal Persons. These three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are involved in an eternal relationship of mutual love. In other words, God's being is intrinsically Gift-love. By contrast, Need-love can't *be like God because God, being perfect and complete, needs nothing.*

In some ways, Lewis's first intentions hold true. He still thinks that if love just means the desire to *be* loved, then we are in a "deplorable state." However, he no longer agrees with his "master, MacDonald" (a Scottish fantasy author) that Need-love isn't real love—it's more complicated than that.

George MacDonald was a Scottish writer and theologian whose fantasy fiction strongly influenced Lewis. He agrees with MacDonald that Need-love is inadequate by itself, but he departs from his mentor when he suggests that Need-love is nevertheless a genuine form of love.

For one thing, if we avoid calling Need-love "love," we distort language. For another, we should be careful about saying that Need-love is simply selfish. Of course, like anything else, Need-love can be indulged in a selfish way. But nobody would say that a child's desire for comfort, or an adult's desire for company, is selfish. In fact, those who *never* feel such desires—who always prefer to be alone—are usually egotists.

Lewis gives a couple of reasons for arguing that Need-love really is love. For one thing, if it isn't *love, then what else should we call it? For another, just because Need-love* can *be selfish doesn't mean it's inherently selfish. Lewis suggests that the desire for comfort and companionship is natural for humans, and that the absence of this desire is more likely to indicate selfishness.*

Thirdly, and more importantly, a Christian's love for God is necessarily Need-love. A Christian has a growing awareness that being human is really "one vast need." This doesn't mean that a Christian can never bring anything besides Need-love to God, but that even the most "exalted souls" know that they never lose their need—and this is how God wants it. This fact leads to "a very strange corollary": that a human being approaches God when they're *least* like God. Fullness and emptiness are opposites, after all.

Another reason that Need-love is a legitimate form of love is that it's a Christian's natural attitude toward God. According to Lewis, a Christian never outgrows Need-love for God; in a way, they become more and more aware of their need over time, not less. Lewis also suggests that, strangely, a needy person draws nearer to God precisely when they least resemble him (because God doesn't have needs, only gifts).

There are two ways of thinking about "nearness to God." First, there's likeness to God, which characterizes all created things—especially human beings—to some degree. Second, there's what might be called "nearness of approach." A person nearest to God in this sense is approaching union with God. This state may or may not coincide with likeness to God. It's something like being on a cliff above a mountain village, unable to climb straight down. To get home to the village, it's necessary to take a five-mile detour around the mountain. But that journey progresses nearer to the village even when it's on a more roundabout path.

Lewis explains one of the book's key distinctions. "Likeness to God" basically means resemblance. Lewis's Christian understanding is that human beings are created in God's image, so in that sense, everyone is "like" God. "Nearness of approach," on the other hand, refers to a person's spiritual proximity to God. Lewis's simile suggests that this proximity doesn't necessarily come about in an obvious, linear way. It's a pilgrimage toward God by a route that appears *slower and more indirect (whereas the obvious shortcut might prove deadly).*

Furthermore, likeness to God is something *given*; nearness of approach is something the human being *seeks*. This "imitation" of God takes Jesus as its model, because Jesus—who didn't just die for human sin, but lived, worked, traveled, dealt with hostility and interruptions—is "the Divine life operating under human conditions."

Lewis further distinguishes between likeness and nearness in that God grants his likeness to everything He creates, whereas people must actively strike for nearness. This search is modeled on the life of Jesus, because in Christian belief, Jesus was both perfectly God and man. Therefore, his life shows what it looks like to approach God "under human conditions."

Lewis explains why he finds this distinction—between likeness and nearness of approach—to be necessary. When we lose balance in our understanding of love, "God is love" can subtly turn into "love is God." Human loves do tend to become all-consuming and to claim that anything done "for love's sake" is not only acceptable but praiseworthy. This happens especially when loves are in their noblest, most self-sacrificing form. Temporary whims or lighthearted patriotism, for example, generally don't run to such extremes.

Lewis argues that when people confuse likeness and nearness to God, they tend to start worshiping love itself instead of God. This is because love might resemble *God while not actually approaching nearer God. Even seemingly high forms of love can be deceptive in this way. Paradoxically, then, more lighthearted forms of love can be less dangerous than the loftier kind.*

Lewis says that love doesn't become a god in people's hearts until our loves really start to resemble God ("Love Himself"). And admittedly, there *is* something truly God-like about the most generous Gift-loves. People who love this way are indeed "near" to God in the sense of likeness. Such likeness has such "splendor" that we can come to give our loves the kind of devotion that's only owed to God. Then, loves become "demonic," destroying both us and themselves. In that way, natural loves can actually become "complicated forms of hatred." (Need-loves won't become demonic like this, because they aren't God-like enough to begin with.)

Again, the more outwardly impressive forms of love—those generous expressions of love that appear God-like—actually run the risk of taking God's place in human hearts. But paradoxically, these loves can lead people farther away from God. When Lewis calls such loves "demonic," he means that instead of being oriented toward God, these loves have become ends in themselves—like someone who's so devoted to a lover that they neglect everyone else. By losing sight of God as their ultimate goal, such "demonic" loves essentially undo themselves.

Lewis believes we should neither idolize nor reject human love. He argues that 19th-century literature tended to idolize it, while more recent "debunkers" despise the "grubby roots" of love too much. It's possible for human loves to be "glorious images of Divine love," no less and no more. The God-likeness of such loves can promote nearness of approach, but it can also hinder it; sometimes they do neither.

Lewis argues for a balanced view of love. Romantic poets worship love in a distorted fashion, but on the other hand, modern detractors see love's darker potential and reject it altogether. Lewis holds that at their best, natural loves can mirror divine love but shouldn't be elevated to divine status themselves. In a way, these loves are ambivalent—neither divine nor demonic in themselves.

CHAPTER 2: LIKINGS AND LOVES FOR THE SUB-HUMAN

Since higher loves can't exist without lower ones, it's a good idea to begin with "mere likings." Since "liking" something means to take pleasure in it, it also makes sense to begin with pleasure. Pleasures have generally been divided into two classes: those that need to be preceded by desire (like thirst precedes the pleasure of a drink of water) and those that need no preparation (like the sudden scent of flowers on a walk). These two categories can be called Need-pleasures and Pleasures of Appreciation.

Lewis discusses likings, or pleasures, as a way of giving his discussion of love greater nuance. In other words, to understand the higher loves, it helps to begin with the lowest—including loves for things other than human beings. These basic pleasures can be need-based or appreciative.

Need-pleasures resemble Need-loves in some ways. But while people tend to look down on Need-loves, the opposite might be true here—people think Need-pleasures are natural, while Appreciative Pleasures are luxuries that tend toward excess. But Lewis's aim (for now) is not to make moral evaluations, but to describe and distinguish.

In the previous chapter, Lewis described Need-love as the yearning of a child for its mother. People tend to view such love as immature. On the other hand, they tend to see Need-pleasures (like a quenching glass of water) as natural or neutral, while Appreciative Pleasures are seen as mere indulgences.

The two kinds of pleasure foreshadow characteristics of our loves. After drinking a glass of water, a thirsty person might say, "I *wanted* that." Someone enjoying the scent of flowers, in contrast, would say something like, "How lovely the smell *is*." The former is about the person satisfying the need; the latter is about the thing being enjoyed.

Lewis suggests that these different kinds of pleasure parallel the aspects of love discussed earlier. In both Need-loves and Need-pleasures, the focus is on having one's own need satisfied. In discussing Appreciative Pleasures, Lewis anticipates a kind of love that's focused outwardly.

Once a Need-pleasure is satisfied, it abruptly loses its appeal (like water to a person whose thirst is quenched). In contrast, pleasures of appreciation are enjoyed for their own sake, almost as if they deserved to be enjoyed—like a good wine to a connoisseur, or the flowers mentioned earlier. There's a parallel between Need-pleasures and Need-loves, in that the love doesn't last longer than the need (though, of course, some needs are permanent). Empty-nesters and neglected lovers know this well. Technically, human beings' need for God never diminishes, but their awareness of it can.

Lewis explains that in general, Need-pleasures expire as soon as they're satisfied. (When a person is no longer thirsty, a glass of water is no longer appealing.) Since Need-loves parallel Need-pleasures, a forgotten parent or lover might feel like that glass of water—dispensable, because they're no longer needed. Pleasures of appreciation, on the other hand, aren't limited by the person's condition—they're appealing for their own sake.

It's harder to explain what Appreciative pleasure corresponds to. This type of pleasure is where our experience of beauty comes from. Such pleasure has a "disinterested" element—that is, we deem beautiful things "very good," in a God-like way, and we want them to exist even if we won't be alive to enjoy them.

Appreciative pleasure corresponds to a kind of love Lewis hasn't directly described yet. As Lewis previously alluded to, the appreciative person is more detached from the thing that's being appreciated than the needful person is from the thing that's needed. To help explain this distinction, Lewis refers to God calling his creation "very good" in the Book of Genesis—creation was beautiful to God, though he did not need it.

Besides Need and Gift, there's a third element to love that's foreshadowed by Appreciative pleasures: love can be offered to other people, not just to things. Appreciative Love is content to gaze at and delight in the beloved. These three elements of love mix together, with only Need-love ever existing alone (and only briefly).

Appreciative pleasure, like enjoying the scent of a flower, anticipates the idea of Appreciative Love—a form of love that cherishes the beloved not because of need, but simply because the beloved is there. Lewis also points out that typically, Need-love, Gift-love, and Appreciative Love don't function independently of one another.

Two special forms of love require discussion. Some people have a strong love of nature, especially the spirit or mood of a landscape. This kind of love, much praised in the 19th century by poets like Wordsworth, is disparaged today. And indeed, it's not quite right to say that nature teaches anything, as the old poets claimed. But for a Christian, nature's "created glory" can, in a certain, indirect way, reflect the uncreated glory of God—though only to a certain point, or else it risks becoming a nature religion. Nature itself can't satisfy the desires she stirs or answer the theological questions she raises.

Before moving on from his discussion of love for non-human things, Lewis addresses two expressions of love he has found to be controversial. Among the Romantic poets, nature was regarded as almost divine in itself. Lewis argues that, from a Christian perspective, a distinction must be made between the creation and God, the creator. Nature reflects its creator, and its beauty, Lewis suggests, stirs love for the creator that nature itself can't fulfill.

Those who love nature in this restrained way seem to be able to hold onto that love. In contrast, those who regard nature as a religion in itself find that they lose it—it becomes "demonic" instead. Those who sit in a garden while saying their prayers might walk away overwhelmed by nature's beauty; but those who go there *seeking* its beauty will walk away empty.

This nature example reflects Lewis's view that when people try to find life's meaning in natural loves (instead of in God), those loves will inevitably let them down. On the other hand, when God remains their ultimate focus, people can continue to enjoy lesser things, too.

Another special form of love is love of one's country. Nowadays, it's common to observe that patriotism can become demonic. In fact, some suspect it's never anything else—but if this were true, we'd have to throw out "half the high poetry" in existence. There's no need here to write an essay on international relations; instead, Lewis wants to draw out what's innocent about this form of love. Though ordinary citizens don't act on an international scale, it's good for them to keep an eye on the health of their patriotism because their patriotism can influence rulers' goodness or wickedness.

Besides nature, patriotism is also controversial in Lewis's day. Lewis suggests that, despite its long poetic heritage, patriotism has gotten a bad rap. He argues that it isn't necessarily demonic, no matter what its modern detractors claim. Like other loves, it's ambivalent—it can have both healthy and harmful impacts.

Patriotism is "ambivalent" because it's a blend of many different things. One of these is the love of home—for a place, its way of life, its culture, its dialect. Such love is a first step beyond "family selfishness." That is, those who don't love their fellow-villagers aren't likely to have progressed far toward loving humanity in the abstract. Natural affections can train the "spiritual muscles," which might later be used for higher loves.

Lewis regards love of home as an "innocent" form of patriotism. It can even be healthy when it leads a person to care about people besides their family, and it can train a person for yet more sophisticated forms of love.

This kind of patriotism isn't aggressive; it just wants to be left alone, and it only fights to protect what it loves. It even promotes kindness toward foreigners, because when you love your own home, it's easy to understand that others love theirs. And it doesn't seek to make other people's homes just like ours—home wouldn't be home unless it were different from other places.

Patriotism that's focused on love of one's home actually provides a basis for loving others, Lewis suggests, as it encourages sympathy for others who love their own homes. So, this kind of love can actually promote appreciation of difference, rather than selfish prejudice.

A second element of patriotism is a certain attitude towards a country's past—particularly the popular imagination of that past (for instance, "Remember Waterloo"). This past imposes an obligation to uphold a certain standard; it also assures us that as our ancestors' offspring, there's hope that we'll succeed. The problem with this attitude is that heroic stories of the past are often biased, exaggerated, or otherwise historically unreliable. Thus, a patriotism based on the past can easily be debunked in the present, leading to cynicism or stubborn resistance instead.

Other forms of patriotism are less benign. One such form is when people take a heroic view of their country's past (like the Battle of Waterloo, where Britain defeated Napoleon in 1815). When people take a romantic view of history and love their country on that basis, they're essentially loving a falsehood. It also does a person no favors, because once their view is debunked, they'll either become entrenched in the lie or succumb to disillusionment.

Lewis thinks it's possible to draw strength from the past without taking a false view of it. Stories of the past should not be mistaken for serious historical study or justifications for today's imperial policy. They should be valued as stories that strengthen a person's will, rather like *sagas*. When they're mistaken for factual history, they can lead to a third thing that sometimes gets called patriotism.

In Lewis's opinion, it's not necessarily wrong to cherish one's national heritage—it depends on one's view of the relationship between past and present. A story, like a Norse saga that blends legend with history, can embolden a person to face the present with courage.

That third thing is the matter-of-fact belief that one's nation is genuinely superior to all others; on its fringe, this belief can be further distorted into "Racialism," which is against both Christianity and science. A fourth element was strongly manifested in 19th-century England through what's been called the "white man's burden." England saw itself as the self-appointed guardian of what they called "natives." And yet this so-called duty, with its thinly veiled altruism, is the better sort of superiority. The worse kind stresses the rights of so-called "superiors" over those they see as inferiors, which leads to exploitation and even murder.

Having discussed benign and misguided forms of patriotism, Lewis turns to those he considers harmful. Patriotism can include fringe ideas of racial superiority, which can lead to imperialism—a phenomenon that reached its height in England in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Though Lewis clearly doesn't endorse imperialism, he sees it as better than the bald racism that seeks to eliminate so-called "inferiors."

So, patriotism is a complex phenomenon. People who reject it entirely disregard the fact that something must fill that vacuum; no one will fight to defend their country otherwise. Vague appeals to justice and humanity probably won't work. It's understandable to defend one's house by force against a burglar, but it's ridiculous to claim that you gave the burglar a black eye on purely moral grounds. It's similar if one claims to be neutral and to only support England's side when England's cause is just. If someone sees their country's cause as "the cause of God," then opposition can't be tolerated—worldly concerns take on a "false transcendence."

While Lewis sees patriotism as ambivalent at best, he argues that it serves a necessary purpose. With the burglar analogy, he argues that nobody resists a burglar because of abstract moral principles; they do it because their home has been invaded. He applies the same principle to national defense, suggesting that a limited kind of patriotism is not only appropriate but necessary. He argues that if someone defends their country only when it's perfectly right or "on God's side," that's actually dangerous, because it makes people more likely to try to wipe out their enemies.

The value of the older patriotic sentiment is that it knew it *was* a sentiment. That is, "wars could be heroic without pretending to be Holy Wars." This kind of love for country could take itself seriously in battle and lightheartedly the rest of the time.

Lewis argues that old, sentimental patriotism (the kind that loves home and values history without regarding these things as sacred) is preferable, because it doesn't take itself too seriously. People with this attitude will fight when necessary, without insisting God is on the same side.

The elements of patriotism just discussed, with their accompanying criticisms, can apply to love for other things, like schools, families, or classes—even churches or factions within churches. When natural love like patriotism borrows the church's transcendent claims, horrible actions can result. Much of "the World" will refuse to listen to Christendom until it repudiates these aspects of its past.

Patriotism is just one example of an ambivalent natural love. Anywhere that people form like-minded groups, it's possible for them to take their affinity in dangerous directions. Lewis says this is especially true in the history of Christianity, when patriotism disguised itself as holy and committed atrocities as a result.

CHAPTER 3: AFFECTION

Lewis begins this chapter with "the humblest and most widely diffused of loves," which humans have in common with animals. In Greek, such love is called *storge*; Lewis calls it Affection. *Storge* is specifically the kind of affection that parents and offspring have for one another. A mother (human or animal) nursing her young is an obvious image.

Having described the elements of natural love and their ambivalent potential, Lewis moves into his discussion of the first of his four broad categories of love.

The image also presents a paradox. Babies have an obvious Need-love, while Mothers offer Gift-love. In another way, mothers, too, have a Need-love for their young; they can't *not* give birth, or they'll die, and they must either nurse or suffer. In this way, the Gift-love is also Need-love. It's a Gift-love that "needs to be needed."

Lewis shows how the previously discussed elements of natural love fit into Affection. When it comes to the mother-child example, those elements function in overlapping ways. Gift-love might be predominant in mothers, but this Gift-love is simultaneously a form of Need-love.

Affection goes beyond the mother-child relationship. Almost anyone can be an object of Affection; it is not a very discriminating form of love, and the people it unites may not seem to be well suited to each other. It overcomes all sorts of barriers—between age, sex, class, and even species. Literary examples include Dox Quixote and Sancho Panza, or even Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad in *The Wind in the Willows*.

Affection isn't only expressed between parents and children. In fact, all kinds of people—and other creatures—can develop Affection for one another, despite obvious outward differences. To illustrate this idea, Lewis names fictional examples from Cervantes's Don Quixote and Kenneth Grahame's children's novel.

Affection has some criteria, however. The object of Affection must be familiar. It usually begins without one's noticing it. It's also humble, modest, and unrefined. The Appreciative Love, discussed earlier, plays an inconspicuous role in Affection; most often, we take objects of affection for granted instead of praising them loudly and publicly.

Affection is largely based on familiarity. There is nothing fancy or showy about this kind of love. While Affection isn't devoid of Appreciative Love, this element gets expressed in an understated way.

It's important to note, however, that Affection doesn't always exist apart from the other loves. It enters other loves and even becomes the medium through which those loves are expressed. For example, making a friend isn't the same thing as becoming affectionate; but when you have an *old* friend, you feel affection for all kinds of familiar characteristics of that person. Even erotic love is best experienced with this "homespun clothing of affection."

In the coming chapters, Lewis will discuss Friendship and Eros (the state of being in love) as different categories of love. Here, he points out that his categories of love aren't strictly divided—they can overlap. Both Friendship and Eros can be expressed through Affection's simple, comfortable habits.

Though Affection is not very discriminating, it makes certain appreciations possible in a unique way. Affection has a special ability to unite people who wouldn't otherwise be drawn to one another. It broadens our minds beyond our own particular tastes. This often shows up among people with whom one is "thrown together" in a family, college, or other such environment. It enables a person to find things to appreciate in a broad cross-section of humanity. It leads from noticing to toleration to enjoyment.

One appreciation's unique functions is simply allowing people who are very different to enjoy one another. As people gain familiarity with others they might not have chosen to associate with, they develop Affection, which pushes against natural human selfishness.

At this point, danger appears. Affection is such a simple, humble, and patient form of love that we could be led to equate it with "Love Himself"—that is, we could come to believe that when fully developed, affection is all we really need. But that's not true. In fact, Affection can be a cause of unhappiness. Its characteristics are ambivalent, meaning that they can cause suffering as well as good. Something of this can be seen in the sickly sweet songs and poems of popular art. The problem with these is that they equate Affection with goodness; but Affection is only an *opportunity* for goodness, not the thing itself.

As Lewis has already discussed, human loves have ambivalent potential, and Affection is no different. Affection becomes distorted when people start to see it as an end in itself—when they assume that because Affection can resemble *God, it means a person has actually drawn* near *to God. Lewis sees evidence for this in the overly sentimental art of his time (the mid-20th century). Instead of seeing Affection as a step towards greater goodness, people stop short here, resulting in Affection becoming grossly exaggerated.*

Part of the problem is with Need-love—craving the Affection of others. People generally think they have to merit friendship or erotic love yet feel entitled to affection. Withholding affection, in fact, is regarded as "unnatural." There's a degree of truth here; there's an instinctual element of maternal love, for example. And given the right conditions, Affection does tend to grow fairly easily and naturally between people. However, those same conditions can also naturally foster distaste.

Affection is so instinctive and familiar (like the affection between mother and child) that people take it for granted. Most of the time, this is understandable and doesn't pose a problem. But the same conditions that so easily foster Affection can just as easily foster conflict and even dislike.

When someone is unlovable, their "ravenous" Need-love can become suffocating for those around them. (King Lear's need for his daughters' love is an example.) Their self-pity makes others feel guilty for their inability to love them back. So, the "'built-in' [...] character of Affection" can be distorted in an ugly way. The informality of home, for example, can be abused when parents use it as an excuse to be disrespectful to their children.

Lewis expands on how Affection can become distorted, drawing a literary example from Shakespeare's King Lear. Often, people's obsession with being loved places a burden on the objects of their Need-love. The burden can be especially strong on relationships in which Affection arises most naturally.

The courtesy of Affection has much to do with tone. Teasing and banter work when they're expressed in the right tone and at the right moment. The deeper the Affection, the better a person knows what those are. But "the domestic Rudesby" abuses the liberties of Affection in order to serve his or her own ego. Often, the same person will confuse those liberties with real Affection and fault the other person for objecting to their rudeness.

Lewis describes how Affection can go wrong in a familiar environment. Deeply affectionate people know each other well enough to tease without causing offense. But Affection is abused when an egotistical person (whom Lewis names a "Rudesby") mistreats others in the name of Affection—sometimes believing they're expressing real love by doing so.

It's important to mention jealousy as well. Every kind of love is susceptible to it. This is especially true for Affection because it relies on the old and familiar, so it regards change as a threat. This can happen when one sibling takes up a new interest, and the other feels left behind. The other will become fiercely jealous and, in response to the "animal" instinct of Affection, even try to sabotage the sibling's rival interests. It also happens when a family member converts to a new religion, or when a member of a lowbrow family becomes an intellectual.

Because Affection is based on familiar bonds, it's especially threatened by change. People become jealous when they fear that the loved one's loyalty has become divided, or that the loved one is moving away from interests or loyalties once held in common. Such things feel like attacks on Affection's very basis.

Affection as a Gift-love can also be perverted. Lewis mentions a recently deceased woman named Mrs. Fidget, whose family has cheered up a lot since she died. Mrs. Fidget often claimed to live for her family, and that was true. She did all the laundry and made hot meals every day, even though her family begged her not to. She fussed and labored over them until they had to do things to help *her*, so that she could do all the things that they didn't want done for them in the first place.

Though it's easier to see how Affection as Need-love can be distorted, it's also the case with Gift-love. Mrs. Fidget is most likely a symbolic character, not a real person—a type who exhausts herself in giving to her family. Yet her giving is ultimately self-serving, fulfilling her own needs more than her family's.

This is an example of Gift-love gone to an extreme. The purpose of Gift-love is to eventually make the giver unnecessary—for example, to feed children so that they can one day feed themselves. The natural tendency of Gift-love—which is often a maternal instinct—is to want the object to receive the good only *itself* can give. The instinct has to be tamed by a higher form of love that simply desires the object's good, no matter where that good comes from. Until that happens, this "ravenous need to be needed" will keep inventing needs to fulfill, imagining itself to be unselfish.

At its best, Gift-love serves the recipient's best interests. In its distorted form, however, it becomes obsessed with the giver's needs— "giving" to the recipient long after these gifts are required. In this form, Gift-love ceases to be real love, becoming what Lewis calls "demonic." Here, Lewis hints at an idea he'll develop later in the book—that a "higher form of love" is needed to break this distorted pattern.

It isn't just parents who do this—the Affection of patron for protégé can work similarly. One example is Emma and Harriet in Jane Austen's novel: Emma only wants Harriet to have the sort of happy life that *she* can give her. It's also a special danger for university professors, who *should* want their students to someday become their rivals. But this doesn't always happen; sometimes a professor can't bear independence of thought in a former pupil, even if that's theoretically what the professor wanted to create.

In Austen's 1816 novel Emma, protagonist Emma Woodhouse is determined to find the perfect match for her poor friend Harriet, ignoring Harriet's own desires. Another example of distorted Gift-love is the teacher who refuses to let a student develop into intellectual maturity. In both examples, the giver appears to be affectionate, but their giving is really self-serving. It's not seeking the best for the recipient, no matter what the giver claims.

The need to be needed also manifests sometimes in the pampering of animals. Lacking an outlet for this need elsewhere, sometimes a person will indulge a pet, usually a dog, until it's in a practically infantile state and not thriving as an animal should. And the animal, unlike a person, can't defend itself. Someone who prefers animal companionship to human should, Lewis thinks, examine their real reasons.

Lewis argues that even in the case of an indulged pet, distorted Gift-love isn't harmless. Indulging pets puts them in an excessively dependent state that doesn't suit an animal. Lewis suggests that when someone prefers animals to humans, it might be because animals, unlike humans, can't fight back against this distorted affection.

Some believe that these cases are merely "neurotic," but Lewis doesn't believe they're simply pathological (though sometimes they can be). If we're honest with ourselves, *everyone* has felt these temptations. It's not a question of disease, but of human sin.

Some people would dismiss distorted forms of Affection as cases of mental illness. While this can be true, Lewis argues that everyone is inclined to such distortions, because (from his Christian perspective) everyone is inclined to do wrong.

Secondly, when people object that "common sense" will prohibit the abuse of Affection, they're actually making the point that the mere feeling of affection isn't enough. It needs reason, balance, and an altogether higher form of love than Affection itself can be. If a person tries to live on Affection, it will "go bad." A grievance- and resentment-fueling love like Mrs. Fidget's actually contains a great deal of hate. It's an example of how Affection, when it becomes a god in a human life, can become a demon.

Lewis suggests that people naturally sense that Affection isn't enough by itself—that, like Mrs. Fidget's smothering love, it will tend to become distorted, causing resentment and essentially unraveling into something "demonic." Later in the book, he will explain the "higher form of love" that Affection requires in order to avoid "going bad."

CHAPTER 4: FRIENDSHIP

Compared to Affection and Eros, friendship isn't something modern people think about very much. It's seldom celebrated in modern literature. Older examples include David and Jonathan, Pylades and Orestes, Roland and Oliver.

Lewis argues that friendship doesn't fit smoothly into modern life as it did in past ages. David and Jonathan (from the Old Testament) and Pylades and Orestes (from Greek mythology) are ancient examples of friendship; Roland and Oliver (from The Song of Roland) are a medieval example.

The ancients saw friendship as "the happiest and most fully human of all loves," but the modern world minimizes friendship. Aristotle classified *Philia* as a virtue, and Cicero wrote a book about *Amicitia*. But today friendship is regarded as marginal, "something that fills up the chinks of one's time."

Ancient writers like Aristotle and Cicero saw friendship as a much more fundamental part of human life. Today, on the other hand, people regard friendship as dispensable and not even necessary.

One reason friendship isn't valued is that few people experience it. This is because there's a sense in which friendship is the "least natural" of loves; it's not instinctive or necessary. A person can go through life without it.

Admittedly, friendship is a rare phenomenon. Other loves, like Affection and Eros, occur more naturally and instinctively; friendship doesn't happen that way, and a person might never experience it.

This "non-natural" quality goes a long way toward explaining why ancient and medieval people thought highly of friendship, and why our own age has little regard for it. Those past ages renounced the world. Friendship seemed to defy "mere nature," especially compared to Affection and Eros. Friendship was more "rational" and seemed to elevate people above the world.

People in past ages didn't value the present world as much as modern people do. That is, they tended to elevate rational, spiritual things (concerns of the soul) above earthly instincts. Therefore, because friendship relied more on rationality than instinct, it was valued as a more spiritual state.

When Romanticism came along and Sentiment was revered, however, emotion and instinct ruled, and the same is true today. All these things worked against friendship; they made friendship seem like an unappealing substitute for the more robust forms of love (like Eros). Other factors include the modern view that human life is just an evolution from animal life, and that friendship has no "survival value." Outlooks that value the collective community over the individual also tend to be suspicious of friendship's exclusivity.

Lewis argues that 19th-century sentimentality devalued friendship in people's minds. In this new cultural context, a more passionate form of love like Eros made more sense. Also influenced by 19th-century evolutionary theory, people stopped seeing anything inherently beneficial about friendship. Modern people valued things that promoted survival in this world instead of things that transcended the world.

Because of all this, it's become necessary in Lewis's time to "rebut the theory that every firm and serious friendship is really homosexual"—especially unconsciously homosexual. Such a claim can never be either proven or refuted. Lewis holds that people who make this claim have never had a true friend.

Lewis's point is that in his day (the mid-20th century), people don't know how to categorize close friendship. Because Eros (romantic/sexual love) is more understandable to modern people, they try to classify friendship as an expression of Eros—they don't see an obvious role for it otherwise.

Though it's possible to feel both Eros and Friendship for the same person, there are some strong distinctions between the two. For example, lovers are always talking about their love, while friends seldom discuss their friendship. Lovers are absorbed in each other, while friends are normally absorbed in a shared interest. And though Eros occurs between two people, two isn't the best number for friendship.

While two categories of love can certainly overlap, Lewis differentiates between Eros and Friendship in several key ways. Essentially, in his view, lovers (in the Eros sense) are turned toward *each other; friends, though side by side, are turned* outward.

The reason for this is as follows. Suppose there are three friends: A, B, and C. If friend A dies, then B doesn't just lose A, but also A's part in C. At the same time, C loses both A and A's part in B. No single friend can throw light on every single facet of another. It's not as though B has C "all to himself"; he actually has *less* of C now that A is dead. This makes friendship "the least jealous of loves"; this love isn't lessened, but only strengthened, when a friend joins other friends.

Lewis's. basic point here is that in a group of friends, each person draws out unique facets of the others. Groups of friends mutually enrich one another in a way that a pair of friends can't do.

This quality of friendship—that we possess a friend more as the number of people with whom we share the friend increases—gives friendship a special resemblance to Heaven, where the sheer number of souls increases each soul's enjoyment of God.

With his deep knowledge of medieval literature, Lewis is likely thinking of Dante's Paradiso (particularly the saints dwelling together in the Empyrean, or the heavenly sphere nearest God). Also relevant is The Celestial Hierarchy *by Pseudo-Dionysius, an influential medieval text about the harmonious lives of angels in God's presence. Friendship can echo such heavenly harmonies.*

For this reason, the "homosexual" theory seems implausible. In certain cultural contexts, such as warlike societies, it's possible for Friendship to be combined with Eros in that manner. It's true that historically, friendships used to be more physically demonstrative, but it's today's society that's "out of step" in this regard.

Contrary to cultural assumptions, Lewis is skeptical that most same-sex friendships have a homosexual undertone. It's more that people used to be much more comfortable expressing friendship outwardly; modern people are the historical outliers in that they assume such expression must be sexual.

Though friendship is something people and communities can survive without, there is a related "matrix of friendship" that communities do need. In ancient communities, men had to get together to plan things like hunts and battles. Afterward, they would discuss these things. Men in paleolithic society must have enjoyed such things greatly and bonded over their shared skills, dangers, and hardships. Certainly, women had such shared, separate society, too. But Lewis knows nothing of that, so he can't speak of it.

All the way back to the prehistoric world, aspects of friendship have provided the glue that holds societies together, like male bonding over basic survival skills. Also, Lewis freely admits that he can only discuss friendship from a male perspective and won't speculate about female norms.

This kind of "talking shop" and enjoyable cooperation is biologically valuable. Nowadays it takes place in barrooms, common rooms, and golf clubs—what might be called Companionship or even "Clubbableness." It's not the same thing as Friendship, but the "matrix" of friendship. Friendship emerges from companionship when companions discover common interests that they thought nobody else shared. Unless such "kindred spirits" find one another, things like art or religion are never born. But when people share their vision, they "stand together in an immense solitude"—though they would always be glad to reduce the solitude by welcoming more people in.

By companionship or "clubbableness," Lewis refers to a kind of pre-Friendship—a state from which friendship can emerge. ("Matrix" is Middle English and Latin for "womb," and there's little doubt that the scholarly Lewis had this in mind when describing the state from which Friendship is born). Friends discover one another in companionship around shared passions. Yet these powerful "kindred" bonds aren't exclusive; they make room for others of like mind.

Today, companionship arises not so much from activities like hunting or fighting, but from shared religion, studies, or work. Often friendship arises from a question that companions agree to be important—but they don't care if they arrive at different answers. Instead of gazing at each other, such friends look ahead on a shared journey. In this sense, having a friend means that you want something beyond friendship. If you seek a friend, affection may arise. But friendship can't be sought for its own sake—it has to be *about* something.

Again, for Lewis, the key point about friendship is that it's outwardly oriented. Friends are on a journey together, sharing a common quest; they're not aiming at the friendship itself. This doesn't preclude affection—in the course of friendship, fondness might very well develop between friends, but it's somewhat incidental to that common aim.

When such friendship emerges between people of different sexes, it passes very easily into erotic love. But this only highlights the distinction between friendship and Eros. When friendship gradually turns into Eros, you will no longer want to share that beloved with anyone. But there is no jealousy about sharing the friendship aspect with other friends; in fact, it only enriches the erotic love.

Lewis doesn't mean that it's impossible for people of the opposite sex to be friends. He does believe such friendship is more likely to become *erotic (romantic/sexual). But the exclusiveness of Eros actually highlights the expansiveness of Friendship—that is, a pair of lovers might happily share friends, but the erotic dimension of their relationship remains theirs alone.*

Reflecting on the fact that nearly every movement has started out from Friendship, it's easy to see that Friendship can both benefit and endanger a community. Friendship can bear fruit that the community can use, but as a "by-product." Similarly, while it's true that a friend can do many good and practical things to help a friend, these "good offices" are more like interruptions. A benefactor isn't the same thing as a friend. Friends always want to get back to the things that really interest them—hence "don't mention it" when a friend does a favor.

Friendship can do good to individuals and communities, but that's not its main purpose. Friendship's shared quest can result in larger movements beneficial for society, and friends happily do each other favors. But these goods are secondary to friendship itself.

Unlike Eros, friendship is "uninquisitive." Ordinary facts about a person are less interesting than the question "*Do you see the same truth?*" You'll get to know all the facts in the end, of course, but they emerge little by little over time; our past and connections are incidental to friendship in a way. In this way, Friendship is "arbitrary." Nobody has a duty to be anyone else's friend. Friendship isn't necessary to survival, but it gives value to survival.

Lewis sees friendship as being focused on shared interests, to such an extent that personal identities, while not irrelevant to friendship, are decidedly secondary in importance. People's histories and characteristics are more like ornaments for friendship, not its theme.

Though friends are absorbed in a shared quest, that doesn't mean they're oblivious to each other. Appreciative Love develops over time as a friend "rings true" again and again, causing our trust, respect, and admiration for a friend to deepen. These things only develop over time and will be missed altogether if they're sought at the outset. Rather, they emerge as friends study, discuss, or pray together.

Mutual regard certainly has a role in friendship. It's not the main idea, however; it develops over time as friends focus together on their shared passions. This especially takes the form of Appreciative Love, or admiration.

Based on what Lewis has said so far, he thinks that at most periods of history, friendships will tend to be between members of the same sex. This is because companionship in shared activities has generally been single-sex throughout history. But in fields where men and women work side by side, friendship can emerge—though it's sometimes painfully mistaken for Eros. Today's society is at a certain disadvantage. In some groups, there's a basis for companionship between the sexes, and in others there isn't. Trouble can emerge in parts of society when there is a chasm between the experiences or educational levels of the sexes. For example, an educated wife might constantly try to bring her husband "up to her level," instead of accepting how things are.

Lewis argues here that social contexts shape friendship. The fact that most friendships are same-sex has more to do with historical factors than with sexual characteristics; in most eras, men and women have tended to have separate tasks and belonged to segregated social circles. This is no longer the case to the same degree, but because of modernity's preference for Eros, opposite-sex friendships are often misunderstood. And even today, some subcultures are more conducive to opposite-sex friendships than others.

When this happens, a kind of hollow egalitarianism emerges, where the sexes will be present together but will never fully engage with each other's worlds. Then those worlds cease to be themselves, because they get diluted by the attempt to accommodate the other sex. People are happier when they're among others who are interested in the same things and discuss them using the same methods.

Lewis argues that when men and women are socialized to have very different interests, trying to mix socially usually backfires. When they try, people are self-conscious about the other sex, and friendships remain superficial.

This accounts for why friendship isn't valued today. There's no space for exclusively male or female friendship. Sometimes, there's even an intentional war against friendship—a hatred and jealousy of friendship as the enemy of Eros or Affection. Lewis sees this especially when wives try to break up their husband's friendships until he's isolated and not really worth being with, because there's nothing to his life beyond what she can see. Sensible people will find it healthier, where cross-sex companionship isn't possible, to preserve single-sex friendships that allow them to appreciate the other sex more.

In a society that doesn't really value same-sex friendships, opposite-sex friendships don't fare well, either—they're seen as obstacles or threats instead. In such an environment, it's better to pursue same-sex friendships. Lewis implies that in order for people in a society to sustain opposite-sex friendships, stable, secure same-sex friendships are a prerequisite.

The preceding discussion of friendship has found it to be "spiritual," not in the sense of being disembodied or holy, but in three other significant ways. The first is that authorities tend to mistrust friendships among their subjects. The second is the jealousy of the majority toward groups of tight-knit friends. The third thing to notice is that the Bible rarely uses Friendship to represent love between God and humanity; it usually turns instead to Affection (God the Father and his children) or Eros (Christ and the Church).

Lewis's meaning of "spiritual" here is a little opaque, but he basically means that Friendship transcends bodily instinct. He suggests that because of this loftier nature, friendship is harder for outsiders to understand and can be perceived as a threat to more "worldly" institutions, like government authorities. Interestingly, the Bible also favors "earthier" loves for its metaphors.

First is the question of authority. Sometimes the common vision shared between friends isn't necessarily positive. Why not, for instance, sacrifice humans? There's a certain delight in finding someone who shares your own sinful proclivities, hatreds, or grievances. When you're in an unsympathetic crowd, it's easy to feel timid and doubtful about your views. But when you're among friends, in no time at all your views will begin to appear "indisputable." In this respect, every friendship can be viewed as a sort of rebellion. No matter what its focus, a friendship can be a threat to the people at the top of society; it is a "pocket of resistance." True friends are harder to correct (by good authorities) or corrupt (by bad ones).

Lewis suggests that authorities aren't necessarily wrong to look at tight-knit friendships as a threat. That's because, human nature being what it is, friendships can form around depraved activities or views (like racism, for example) just as easily as admirable ones. Friendships tend to reinforce people's existing views, whether they're good or bad. So, friendships can have a destabilizing effect on society.

Though the ancients were right to see that friendship can be a school of virtue, it can also be a school of vice. That is, friendship is "ambivalent." Like other natural loves, friendship is susceptible to particular weaknesses. For instance, a circle of friends can ignore the views of those outside their group, which can lead to total indifference to outsiders. In other words, the attitude of "not giving a damn" can develop into a coldness toward voices that should be heard. This also leads to a group's faults becoming entrenched, and even scorning outsiders—the group effectively becoming a little aristocracy of its own. It's easy to see this about other groups but harder to see it among one's own.

Like Affection, Friendship can be either good or bad. Its biggest weakness is its exclusivity, which can shut others out and make people worse as easily as it improves them. While it's easy to see this happening to others, these distortions are harder to detect for those on the inside of a group of friends.

While this sense of superiority can be expressed in very inoffensive ways, it can also become bitter and incapable of seeing outsiders as specimens of various groups rather than humans. They go out of their way to communicate to others that they're not part of the circle. In such a case, the friendship becomes "about" nothing more than excluding others. Of course, friendship must exclude to some degree. But it's a short step from exclusion to the pride of exclusiveness. When a group of friends starts spending its energy on securing itself and keeping others out, it falls from friendship back into mere companionship.

When a Friendship deteriorates into being an exclusive faction, it loses its focus on that external thing it was originally centered around. In other words, it ceases to be a friendship at all. This is another of Lewis's examples of how natural loves can turn "demonic" when they become self-obsessed, collapsing into a kind of parody of themselves.

So, Friendship's natural danger is Pride. Perhaps this is why scripture doesn't use friendship as a metaphor very often; it's already quite spiritual. It's easy to see that calling God "Father" is a symbol. But in friendship's case, it could be easy to mistake the symbol for what's being signified. This would encourage us to mistake God-likeness for nearness of approach. This is why friendship especially needs divine protection—it is a narrow path. If there's no Appreciative love, it's not friendship; and yet, appreciative love runs the risk of turning into a "mutual admiration society."

Lewis suggests that Affection works better as a biblical metaphor because most people won't mistake God for a literal father (in other words, the symbol is easily understood as a symbol). But Friendship, in a certain way, resembles God so closely that it's more easily mistaken for actual nearness to God. Thus, it demands a careful balance—friends must genuinely admire each other, and yet they can become too absorbed in each other.

People tend to believe they've chosen their friendships, but a Christian doesn't believe in chances. Friendships aren't rewards for our good taste, but God's instrument to reveal the God-given beauties in each person to all the others. Those beauties are accordingly increased. Since God has chosen the guests, it's dangerous to "reckon without our host."

Lewis concludes this chapter by challenging the idea that friendships are a matter of completely free choice. He suggests that for Christians, they're actually divine gifts meant to highlight God's creative handiwork in each person. So, Christians should enter into friendships with this divine purpose in mind.

CHAPTER 5: EROS

Eros refers to the state of being in love. This is more than a discussion of just human sexuality, however; that's just one ingredient of "being in love." There's a carnal sexual element that Lewis will refer to as "Venus." Sexuality can operate without Eros or as part of it. By saying this, Lewis isn't making a moral judgment about the relationship between Eros and sexuality—that is, sex without Eros isn't necessarily wrong (throughout history, arranged marriages generally weren't dependent on Eros, after all). And on the other hand, a "soaring and iridescent Eros" that's not very sensual can still be adulterous or otherwise hurtful to others.

While "Eros" is generally associated with sexuality, Lewis sees sex ("Venus") as just one aspect of Eros, and it's not even absolutely necessary. Likewise, sex can exist without Eros. And the goodness or distortion of Eros isn't necessarily connected to sexuality—like many other aspects of the natural loves, sex is ambivalent.

Sometimes a man will feel sexually attracted to a woman and only later "fall in love," but Lewis suggests this is rare. More often, a man becomes preoccupied with a woman as a whole person, and Eros gradually awakens. Another way of saying this is that sex without Eros just desires sex in itself; Eros wants the beloved person. Someone who just wants sex sees the other person as "the necessary piece of apparatus." But Eros means desiring a particular person and not just the pleasure that person can give.

Lewis sees Eros as something deeper than simple sexual desire; it's an attraction to a whole person. Sex can happen without Eros (in which case the other person isn't really appreciated as a whole individual), but Eros can also be fully developed—a person can be completely in love— without sex ever happening.

In this way Eros transforms a Need-pleasure into an Appreciative-pleasure. The intense need sees the object of its need as admirable in itself, beyond the need. In this way, too, Eros almost becomes a mode of expression, something directed into the outside world and not back into oneself.

Lewis explains how different elements of love are active within Eros. Though sexual desire is a form of Need-pleasure, the experience of Eros, or being in love, gathers that need into a deeper Appreciative-pleasure that admires the whole person.

Lewis now turns to some moral evaluations. Some people have viewed the danger of Eros in its "carnal" element, seeing it as purest when "Venus" is minimized. But this isn't the approach taken in the Bible. St. Paul, for instance, actually discourages abstinence from Venus for too long. Anyway, the medieval theologians were celibates who likely didn't understand the relationship between Eros and sexuality.

Even though Lewis sees Eros as bigger than sexual desire, sex is still important for Eros. He points out that the Bible doesn't disparage sex and actually speaks frankly of it (the apostle Paul warns married couples not to neglect sex for too long) and suggests that, in this respect, unmarried theologians haven't been reliable interpreters of the Bible.

One present-day danger is making Eros serious in the wrong way. There's very little joy in sex these days and too much solemnity. Of course, it is serious. Theologically, it's serious because it mystically symbolizes the union between God and humanity. It's also serious because it's a participation in the natural forces of life and fertility, because it involves obligations as a potential parent, and because it often has an inherent emotional gravity. But our humanity demands that we not be totally serious about it, any more than we would be totally serious about eating. It is "one of God's jokes" that something as lofty as Eros is linked to such a mundane bodily appetite.

Lewis argues that modern people sometimes take sex too seriously. Sex does have important symbolism and often feels like a serious experience; it can also have life-changing outcomes if it results in a pregnancy. But if sex is only *serious, then something's missing. In a way, sex is just another bodily function that shouldn't be regarded either too gravely or too flippantly. Lewis suggests that the connection between love and sex is evidence of God's sense of humor.*

Rather than rejecting the body as filthy or deifying it, Lewis prefers Francis of Assisi's view of regarding the body as "Brother Ass." After all, nobody can "either revere or hate a donkey." There is an element of the "buffoon" in the body and certainly in the body's expression of Eros. The body provides a sort of clumsy undertone to the loftier music of Eros.

Lewis cites the medieval book The Life of St. Francis, *in which the titular saint likened his body to a burden-bearing donkey that shouldn't be indulged* or *abused. He suggests that people should have a sense of humor about their body's role in the expression of love, neither hating nor revering it.*

Lewis recognizes a certain "Pagan" element in sex. That is, in sex participants aren't just themselves but representatives of all masculinity and femininity. But this must be taken playfully. or else it becomes idolatrous. For example, a woman who takes self-surrender in sex too literally would be offering to a man something that belongs only to God. Likewise, a man would be a "blasphemer" if he took literally the "sovereignty" to which Venus momentarily raises him. But these things can be enacted, as in a ritual or drama. That is, nakedness makes couples a sort of "universal He and She."

By "Pagan" element, Lewis means that sex has an inherent, primal symbolism. So, every man and woman who engage in sex are symbolizing "Man" and "Woman" in general; sex is an embodiment of something universal to all humanity. Yet Lewis makes clear that this participation in universal symbolism shouldn't be woodenly applied to relationships in everyday life. In other words, a man might feel briefly godlike during sex, but that doesn't mean he should walk around with that attitude all the time.

But with all this in mind, it's also important to avoid confusing Eros with a higher mystery. Just as the natural mystery can be taken too seriously, so the Christian mystery of marriage can be taken not seriously enough. While the Bible says that the husband must be the head of his wife, he does this in the sense that—like Christ being the head of the church—he gives up his life for her and cares for her inexhaustibly exactly when she is least easy to love. Neither of these "crowns"—the "Pagan" or the "Christian"—should be begrudged a man, because the first "is of paper and the other of thorns."

Lewis addresses another kind of Eros symbolism: the traditional Christian teaching (found in the Epistle to the Ephesians) that the husband is the "head" of his wife in the same sense that Christ is the head of the Church. He implies that this teaching is often taken lightly, whereas it's deadly serious—much as Christ died for imperfect people, a husband must also be willing to suffer for his wife no matter what. He argues that this shouldn't make a man arrogant—much as his "Pagan" crown is just pretend, his "Christian" crown is basically a pledge that he's willing to die (Christ wore a crown of thorns on the cross).

The same things can be said of Eros as of Venus. Within Eros, Venus doesn't really aim at pleasure; similarly, Eros doesn't aim at happiness. It's a mark of Eros that we'd rather share unhappiness with someone we love than be happy on other terms. If that isn't true, it's not really Eros.

Lewis suggests that people in love have sex because they're in love, and pleasure might come from that. In the same way, people in love don't aim at being happy. Happiness might follow, but even if it doesn't, they'll still be in love.

Eros is such a grand, godlike thing that it can easily be mistaken for the voice of God Himself. But again, Eros can lead to evil as well as good—to cruelty and murder as well as faithful marriage. Some, like Plato, have seen Eros as really transcendent—hence Plato's teaching about soul-mates. But many "love-matches" prove to become unhappy marriages, so Plato can't be right.

Like other natural loves, Eros is ambivalent—it can lead to either good or bad. Some classical writers elevated Eros more highly. Lewis is probably thinking of Plato's Symposium *here, in which souls long to reunite with their "other half." But Lewis argues that being in love doesn't guarantee lasting happiness.*

There are equivalent theories in our own day. For example, Shaw's Romanticism, which hears in Eros the voice of the "Life Force" or "evolutionary appetite." This force overcomes couples in order to create parents or ancestors for the "superman." It has nothing to do with people's happiness or with morality, but with perfecting the human species. But Lewis argues that there's no clear relationship between the intensity of Eros between a couple and the superiority of their offspring.

Lewis refers to dramatist George Bernard Shaw, whose play Man and Superman *describes a "Life Force" guiding evolution. This idea basically sees Eros as a vehicle for improvement of the human species. Lewis rejects this idea. He sees it as a variant of Plato's view, in that both see Eros itself as a kind of supernatural phenomenon.*

Neither the views of Plato nor of Shaw are of much use to a Christian. A Christian doesn't need to ignore the god-like aspect of Eros, because it really does resemble God Himself in a way—but not necessarily by approach. It can become a *means* of approach; it's a kind of example of the love we should give to God and other people. The "prodigality" of Eros is an example of the free, generous love we should offer to him and others. But Eros itself is never enough; it has to be "chastened and corroborated by higher principles."

Lewis agrees that Eros has aspects that resemble *God. But as he's explained before, likeness isn't the same thing as actual* nearness. *In other words, Eros at its best can be wholeheartedly generous, actually drawing people near God. But even its best characteristics, left to themselves, can unravel and lead people away from God, too.*

If unconditionally honored and obeyed, however, Eros becomes demonic. It rebels against everything that opposes it. It's not so much that people in love idolize one another, but that they'll idolize Eros itself. They almost boast that love forces them to do wrong things. Love becomes a law unto itself, a god with its own religious demands. These aren't necessarily acts of unchastity, but neglect of loved ones and other betrayals of one's conscience that almost take on the tone of pious sacrifices.

Unconditional Eros becomes "demonic" because it demands that a person give their all. People will then use Eros as justification for all sorts of wrong actions—not necessarily bad sexual behavior, but behaviors that harm others outside the erotic relationship. People will even deceive themselves into believing their actions are good, not realizing that love has become a dictator in their lives.

There is a sense in which Eros does enable us to "love our neighbour as ourselves," even if it's just one neighbor. This gives a foretaste of Love Himself ruling within us. But even between the best lovers, the old self reemerges. Then Venus will eventually become sexuality again. Those who understand that feeling isn't everything won't be undone by this. It's up to us to follow through on the promises of Eros even when it's not present. Eros, then, must be ruled by something else.

At its best, Eros is like God's love. But like any other natural love, it "goes bad" unless it's corrected by divine love. When the powerful feeling of being "in love" goes away, Eros tends to decay into more sexuality. Lewis suggests that when Eros is governed by a higher form of love, it can remain steady even when emotions fluctuate or fade.

CHAPTER 6: CHARITY

Lewis says that the "burden of this book" has been to demonstrate that the natural loves aren't enough. At first, he vaguely spoke of "decency and common sense" as what's needed to help love, then later revealed this to be "goodness," and finally "the whole Christian life." None of this is meant to denigrate the natural loves, but to show "where their real glory lies."

Now that Lewis has discussed Affection, Friendship, and Eros, he starts drawing the book to a close by discussing what he's hinted at all along: the "real glory" of the natural loves; the thing that completes them. Each of the three preceding loves has been shown to be inadequate and even "demonic" unless helped by something greater.

Like a **garden**, love must be constantly tended. And like a garden, when the garden is gloriously in bloom, the gardener's contributions will seem small compared to the work of nature. And they won't be effective without the "rain" of God's grace. But this contribution, even if it's just weeding and pruning, is still indispensable.

Lewis likens love to a garden that will grow out of control unless it's carefully tended. Nothing in the garden will grow unless God's grace (His undeserved, freely given help and favor) "rains" on it. Still, the gardener's (the individual Christian's) work is vital to make sure that the various flowers don't proliferate too much or grow in the wrong direction.

Lewis has avoided talking about natural loves as rivals to the love of God. This is for two reasons. First, it's not the point where most readers need to begin. For most, the rivalry is still between ourselves and the human Other. It's dangerous to take on a more advanced duty too quickly. Secondly, it's self-evident that natural loves can't even remain themselves and do what they're meant to do without God's help.

Lewis suggests that for most readers, the "rivalry" between God and natural loves (that is, the fact that people will love lesser things more than they love God) isn't where they need to start. That's because most people love themselves more than anyone else. Also, natural loves usually become distorted long before they pose a threat to love for God.

In earlier periods, before the 19th century, the question of this rivalry would have been more prominent in a book like this one. Before the Victorians, there was less danger of idolatrously loving our fellow human beings. If anything, earlier Christians felt that love for others was likely to be too much. For example, Lewis is forced to reject the approach of St. Augustine, as much as he otherwise owes him. In *Confessions*, Augustine writes of his heartbreak after the death of his friend Nebridius. From this experience, Augustine drew the lesson that it's wrong to give your heart to anything but God, because only God does not die.

Lewis explains that in past eras, Christians were very aware that love for other people could rival love for God; they wrote of it often. He specifically cites an example from Augustine's Confessions, *written around 400 C.E. When Augustine mourned Nebridius, he concluded that giving one's heart to anyone but God is excessive. Lewis greatly admires Augustine, but he disagrees with this view of love.*

There is good sense in Augustine's view, especially to those with a cautious temperament. But Lewis maintains that it's far from the attitude of Christ. He doesn't believe that Christ's teaching is meant to give us security in this life. In fact, he believes this part of Augustine is a holdover from the pagan philosophy of that time—it's closer to Stoicism or Neoplatonism. In contrast, Christ wept over Jerusalem and Lazarus, and he had a disciple whom he especially loved. It's clear that God doesn't offer "insurances against heartbreak."

Lewis critiques Augustine's view on the basis that Christians are not meant to take a cautious attitude when it comes to love. In this aspect, Augustine was influenced more by his culture than by Christ. Looking at the Gospels' portrayal, Lewis points out that Christ enjoyed close friendships and sorrowed over loved ones' deaths. Christians are meant to imitate Christ, and from His own example, they can see that avoiding human love isn't an option.

When it comes to love, there's no such thing as a "safe investment." It's impossible to love without being vulnerable; loving at all means that your heart will ache and probably be broken. If you want to avoid this, you have to avoid giving your heart to anyone, even a pet. Instead, you have to avoid all entanglements, enclosing your heart as if in a coffin. Your heart might remain unbroken there, but it will also become unbreakable. The only alternative to tragedy is damnation; the only place "safe" from the dangers of love, outside of Heaven, is Hell.

Lewis goes on to argue that a person cannot love "safely." Love of any kind makes the lover vulnerable to pain and heartbreak. Yet the alternative is a hardened heart—basically a dead one. Lewis equates an unbreakable heart with damnation because a hard heart can't be open to God. If someone doesn't want to suffer the pain of love, they're essentially choosing Hell (where love doesn't exist).

Lewis believes that even the most inordinate loves are closer to God than "self-protective lovelessness." We can only draw near to God by accepting the sufferings that love brings and offering those sufferings to him, not by trying to avoid them.

It's actually better to love someone "too much" than to avoid love, because love, even at its weakest, is like God (who is Love). To approach God closer, it's necessary to embrace suffering.

In fact, Lewis argues that it's probably impossible to love another human being "too much." It's certainly possible to love someone too much *in proportion to* our love for God; but the problem there is that our love for God is too small, not that our love for the other person is too big. And this isn't ultimately a question of the intensity of our feelings. The real question is which love you choose to put first.

Lewis goes on to explain that when love gets off balance, it's not a question of loving someone else "too much," but of loving God too little. And "love" has more to do with who takes priority and claims one's highest loyalty, not of how one feels at a given moment.

This is what Christ was getting at when he taught that if anyone followed him without hating father, mother, or wife, that person couldn't be his disciple. But Christ didn't mean what we normally think of when we think of "hate" (i.e., resentment or delighting in another's pain). Rather, he means to make no concession to something, to set our face against its claims, no matter how sweet they sound.

Here, Lewis cites Luke 14:26, where Christ emphasizes the great hardship and self-denial involved in following him. The Bible verse uses the word "hate" in an exaggerated sense to highlight this stark choice. One shouldn't bear animosity toward beloved people, yet those people must not become obstacles to the person who truly seeks God.

In the end, as Jesus also taught, we can't serve two masters; we'll end up hating one and loving the other. In the end, we can't let those closest to us come between us and obeying God—and when it comes to a choice like this, our rejection will certainly feel like "hatred" to the rejected. This is why it's important to "order our loves" so that a situation like this never comes up.

The reason a Christian must make this stark choice is that, eventually, love for God and love for others will inevitably conflict. Lewis suggests that in order to avoid harsh rejection of human loves, it's best to get into the habit of putting God first before conflict can take root.

In fact, a marriage or friendship should never go forward if there's disagreement on this fundamental issue. The best love isn't blind. If the person we love holds to the motto "All for love," then their love isn't worth having, because it's not related to Love Himself in the right way.

Lewis suggests that a person should enter any serious relationship with their eyes open—that is, knowing what each person values most. If someone claims that love is their highest loyalty, that means God isn't. Implicitly, when someone doesn't love God above all, they can't love others the right way, either.

This brings Lewis to his last "steep ascent" in the book—to relate human loves to Love (God) in a more precise way. Of course, even this can only be analogous, since human beings, even the humblest and holiest, can't have a direct knowledge of God. Lewis encourages readers to take the following as a sort of myth, to use what's useful, and to reject what isn't.

Up to this point, Lewis has talked around the issue of human and divine love, implying that they can coexist but not explaining how. Now he suggests that this is the hardest issue in the book, in part because God transcends human understanding.

It's important to start with the belief that God is love. God's love is all Gift-love, because he has no needs to be fulfilled. If we believe that God needed to create, then we essentially reduce God to a kind of school headmaster. Rather, God loves "into existence wholly superfluous creatures" so that he can love them and make them perfect.

Lewis returns to one of the book's first points—that God is love. Because God is completely whole and sufficient in Himself, He can't need anything from people. He freely chose to create people—to give them life—because He wanted to love them and make them like Himself.

As Creator, God puts both Gift-love and Need-love into people. The former reflects God's likeness, though Gift-love isn't necessarily, in all people, the same thing as nearness of approach to God. Need-loves, on the other hand, don't resemble God's love at all.

Lewis repeats the distinction between Gift-love and Need-love that he presented earlier. He also reminds readers that while Gift-love looks like God (who is all Gift-love), a person giving Gift-love isn't necessarily *drawing closer to God in his or her character.*

In addition to these natural loves, God can bestow two gifts. The first is a share of His own Gift-love (different from natural Gift-love in that it always simply wants what's best for the beloved). Natural gift-love is always directed toward what we find inherently lovable. In contrast, Divine Gift-love enables us to love what's unlovable, like enemies, outcasts, and others who don't easily attract love.

God gives everyone Need-love and Gift-love as parts of their humanity. He can also grant people supernatural counterparts to these loves. While natural Gift-love tends to become selfish, supernatural Gift-love is always focused on the beloved's well-being, and it's equipped to love those who, left to themselves, most people wouldn't choose to love.

Paradoxically, God also enables people to have a Gift-love toward himself. In a sense, it's not possible for us to give anything to God that doesn't already belong to Him. But since it's possible for us to withhold our wills and hearts from God, He also makes these things in such a way that we can willingly offer them back to Him.

Lewis has made it clear that God doesn't have Need-love, since He needs nothing. In a way, then, supernatural Gift-love is something God graciously grants to people—enabling them to offer their hearts to Him—even though He doesn't really "need" them.

Everyone would agree that such love should be called Charity. But Lewis would add two other gifts to this—a supernatural Need-love of God and a supernatural Need-love of each other. The first isn't the same thing as Appreciative love for God, or adoration. Rather, it's a way that God turns our need for Him into Need-love. He likewise transforms our need for others into a supernatural receptivity.

Lewis finally names the fourth love, Charity—supernatural Gift-love. Charity can also encompass supernatural forms of Need-love. Humans can delight in God abstractly (Appreciative love), but God also wants them to depend on him in a loving, personal way.

In the first case, need exists in us already by virtue of the fact that we're creatures, and it's increased by the fact that we're *fallen* creatures. But by grace, we recognize and gladly accept our need for God. Without this grace, our desires and our necessities would oppose each other. To outsiders, Christian prayers of unworthiness can sound insincere; but they're really ways of constantly negating false notions of ourselves and renewing our awareness of our need for God (things that, by nature, we constantly forget).

Lewis expands on the idea of supernatural Need-love for God. Because human beings habitually sin, they always need God. But there's a difference between this kind of bare, natural need and a joyful, loving dependence—the latter "grace" allows people not just to need, but to desire *to need. This accounts for the language of much Christian prayer; being sinners, people are prone to forget how much they need God and need to remind themselves of it in the act of seeking Him.*

This natural self-perception constantly tries to tell us that there's something inherently attractive in us, instead of the fact that we're mirrors reflecting the sun's light. We need grace in order to fully and delightedly accept our need and take joy in that dependence on God. When we give up any pretense to intrinsic freedom or worth, that's when we discover true freedom and worth because they're given to us by God.

Lewis explains that human beings are primed to see love as something they've earned. The Christian view, on the other hand, is that as God's creatures, people are made in God's image ("mirrors reflecting [God's] light") and therefore have inherent dignity. They don't merit *that dignity through their own efforts. Humans don't naturally understand this; that's why they require God's grace (in the form of supernatural Need-love).*

The second gift is Need-love for one another. We want to be loved by others because we are smart or beautiful or useful. The realization that somebody is offering us Gift-love, then, is a shock. It's very difficult to receive love that doesn't depend on our own attractiveness. An example is a husband who's struck down shortly after marriage by an incurable disease that renders him utterly helpless. In such cases, it really can be harder to receive than to give. But this extreme case shows that we all receive Charity; there's something in all of us that's not naturally loveable.

Lewis describes people as naturally selfish, so it may seem counterintuitive to suggest that people struggle to receive. But again, the point is that people naturally want to be loved because they deserve it; without divine grace, they lack the humility to accept that they're receiving Charity (unearned love). This is true for everyone, though, even if it's not an extreme case like debilitating illness.

Sometimes it's easier to understand cases where a person is called to totally renounce natural loves (like Abraham leaving his family and homeland). It's harder to understand those cases where a natural love is allowed to continue but must be continually transformed. In a case like this, God's love doesn't substitute itself for natural loves. Instead, those loves are "summoned to become modes of Charity" while also remaining what they are.

Lewis alludes to the story from Genesis where God calls Abraham to abandon everything familiar in order to receive his divine inheritance. Though this is an archetypal story for Christians, Lewis suggests that God doesn't normally work that way. More often, He lets people keep their natural loves, but He insists on transforming them.

Lewis observes that there's "a sort of echo" of the Incarnation in this. Christ is both God and man; so, too, the natural loves are called both to become Charity and to remain natural loves. The natural loves are taken up into Charity and made instruments of Love Himself. This can happen to any activities of the natural loves—games, jokes, conversations, a walk, or sex.

The Incarnation refers to the Christian teaching that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ. Lewis compares the coexistence of natural and divine loves to the Incarnation—two seemingly opposite things existing together without nullifying each other. Any expressions of natural love can be transformed by God's grace in this way.

It's easy to take a wrong turn at this point. People who imagine they've already arrived at this transformation can make an embarrassing show of their spirituality, constantly asking or offering forgiveness, for example. The real transformation more often happens in a subtle, even secret way, when we don't realize it's happening.

Lewis suggests that God normally works in gradual, quiet ways that aren't terribly obvious. If people think they've attained Charity, in other words, there's a good chance they're wrong. And if they're showy about their love, it's quite likely they are.

We are constantly invited by God to turn our natural loves into Charity. This happens in the very annoyances of everyday life—opportunities to practice tolerance and forgiveness. The practicing of these virtues is the process of turning love into Charity. Where annoyances are plentiful, it's actually perhaps easier to practice these virtues than when there aren't many.

God works through the most mundane events to transform people's natural loves, by divine grace, into Charity. He does this by giving people opportunities to practice love in simple, everyday circumstances. This means that a trying relationship is actually a great training ground for Charity.

God makes it clear that "flesh and blood" can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This isn't just true of human beings, but of our loves—only those into which God has entered can ascend to Heaven. And like with human beings, our loves can only be raised if they've in some way shared in Christ's death. There's no escaping this death, and it's the only hope of being raised from the dead.

Only supernatural things exist in Heaven. In Christian theology, human beings get to Heaven by sharing spiritually in Christ's death and resurrection on their behalf. Lewis suggests that this is true for loves as well as people. Natural loves have to die and be "resurrected" in order to be suitable for heavenly life.

Theologians have often asked whether people will recognize each other in Heaven. Lewis speculates that it might depend on the nature of their love on Earth. It could be that merely natural loves won't be very interesting in Heaven. After all, natural things will have passed away there.

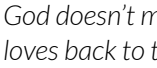
Lewis switches gears slightly to consider the common question of whether human relationships will persist in Heaven. He suggests that if a human love is transformed from natural to divine, it will—but that if it isn't, it won't, and it might not be missed in Heaven.

Lewis also refuses to end by seeming to support the illusion that reunion with our dead loved ones is the goal of Christian life, as painful as this is. When we believe in Heaven *for the sake of* reuniting with a beloved, and in God for the sake of Heaven, it just doesn't work—it's ultimately fantasy. Heaven can only give heavenly comfort, not earthly comfort.

Lewis punctures the popular conception of Heaven as a place where loved ones are reunited. He doesn't mean that this won't *happen in Heaven, but that it isn't the main point. Fixating on this possibility is asking for the wrong thing from Heaven, which is primarily about union with God.*

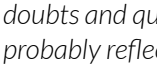
This is because, if the point of Heaven was to find human love there, the Christian faith is all wrong. Christianity teaches that human beings were made for God. And it's only because our earthly beloved has reflected God in some way that we've loved them. So, it's not that we're asked to turn from those loves to loving a "Stranger." Rather, when we see God, we'll realize we've always known Him. All that's true about earthly loves is really from Him, and it's only ours because it was first his. In Heaven, we'll turn from the "rivulets to the Fountain." And by loving God more than them, we'll love *them* more, too.

Lewis further explains that God made human beings for Himself; they're on a journey to become more like Him and ultimately join Him in Heaven. Focusing on human love is missing the point. In fact, loving anyone is ultimately loving God, because each person in some way reflects God. So, turning away from earthly loves to seek God doesn't mean abandoning those loves—it means tracing those loves back to their divine Source.



Of course, while still on Earth, we still experience bereavement and loss. It might be that the purpose of bereavement is to force us to try to believe that, even though we can't feel it, God is our true Beloved.

Lewis was familiar with the subject of grief, as he faced his wife Joy's illness and death around the time of writing The Four Loves. *The doubts and questions he faced during his own bereavement are probably reflected here.*



Lewis lists a third grace that God gives under the heading of Charity: a supernatural Appreciative Love toward Himself. It's the most desirable of God's gifts and the "true centre of all human and angelic life." While a better book would start with this love, he says, his must end here, because he doesn't dare proceed further. It is hard for us to know if we've ever experienced this love, especially if we have good imaginations. Most often, we experience it more as a gap or absence—a growing awareness of our unawareness, like standing beside a waterfall and hearing no noise. "To know that one is dreaming is to be no longer perfectly asleep"—but to hear about the "fully waking world," one should consult better authors.

Lewis concludes by considering a final expression of Charity. The supernatural Appreciative Love he refers to here is what medieval mystical writers described as contemplative love for God—adoration of God in Himself, apart from what He gives. (Though, ironically, this rarest supernatural love can also only be experienced by God's grace.) Lewis considers this love to be too high and too pure for him to speak about. It's the kind of love that transcends description in words. Lewis compares this kind of love to waking up from a dream to something new—something few have experienced, and a subject best treated with reverent silence.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