

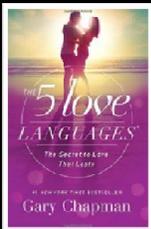


1 John 1:1-4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

What's Love Got to Do with It?

- We live in a world today that is very interested in the idea of love, but distancing itself from the idea of God.
- An Amazon search reveals almost 900,000 books related to love.
- A Google search of "greatest love songs" gets almost 12 million hits.



What's Love Got to Do with It?

• We live in a world today that is very interested in the idea of love, but distancing itself from the idea of God.

• "If you were born between 1925 and 1945 there is a 60 percent chance that you are in church today.

If you were born between 1946 and 1964 there is a 40 percent chance that you are in church today. If you were born between 1965 and 1983 there is a 20 percent chance that you are in church today. If you were born after 1984 there is a 10 percent chance that you are in church today." (Alan Roxburgh)



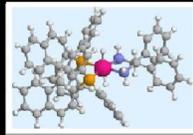
What's Love Got to Do with It?

• The "secular" world that denies the existence of anything "spiritual."

• If this is true, then you are only here because of a random set of events that happened without reason, intention or purpose.

• If this is true, then when we say something "matters" because we feel that thing matters in our hearts or minds, all that is really happening is chemistry.

• If this is true, then what we describe as "love" is just a chemical response.



What's Love Got to Do with It?

• There are *many* people who profess to adopt this soul-less philosophy toward life, but almost *none* of them actually *live* like love is just a set of chemical responses.



Love Came First

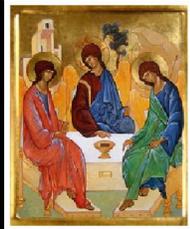
- The story of Christmas dares to tell us that *love existed before the foundation of the world, created the world, redeemed the world, and is still transforming the world.*



- "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes... and our hands have touched " (1 Jn. 1:1)
- Both 1 John 1 and John 1 make it clear that Jesus is God and was with God before this thing we call "existence" came to be.

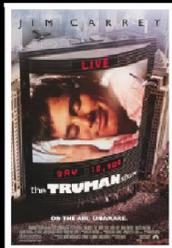
Love Came First

- Many other religions propose that love was birthed within creation, created by humans.
- Christianity proposes that love predates creation because it has always existed within the beautiful, holy and powerful relationship shared among the Trinity.
- 1 John 4:16 – God is love.
- 1 John 4:19 – ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.



Where Are You Looking?

- We are tempted to think that looking further "out" or "away" in the physical realm will do the trick.



Where Are You Looking?

- The beauty of Christmas, part of the Meaning in the Manger, is that God –because of his great love– has already chosen to reveal himself within his creation!



Closing Reflections

- Thank God that he has chosen to reveal himself to his creation; that he loved us first.
- Consider your own definition of "love." Does it look more like the manger and the Incarnation, or is it shaped more by other influences?
- Pray for someone you know who needs some extra love this Christmas season because of life circumstances, then ask God to show you how to reflect Incarnational love to him/her.



The Meaning in the Manger
Love Really Matters
