

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19) NIV84

Dear Anne and David,

Some young children, like some you have taught, Anne, were asked what love means. Let me share some of their answers:

- ☆ Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on cologne and they go out and smell each other.
- ☆ Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs.
- ☆ Love is what makes you smile when you're tired.
- ☆ When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.
- ☆ There are two kinds of love: our love and God's love, but God makes both of them.

Some of those kids have a wonderful understanding of love, don't they?

Love has brought the two of you here today—love for each other, love for God. Love caused you to choose this text for your wedding sermon, a text that talks about prayer and love, about the Father, Christ, and the Spirit, about being filled with **“all the fullness of God.”**

In this text, Paul is praying for his beloved congregation of Ephesus much as parents pray for their children. David, your mother and I have prayed so many things for you, just as I'm sure, your parents have prayed so many things for you, Anne. One of the things for which we've prayed is that God would bless you with a spouse, a partner for life, who

loves God above all else and who loves you with a self-sacrificing love. David, I don't know how God could have answered our prayer any better!

As I mentioned, your wedding sermon text speaks of Christ's love for you, which is the pattern of your love for each other. But it is not that you just know and understand that Jesus loves you...Paul wants you to know and grasp the love of Christ for you. Do you hear the difference?

Let me illustrate: You know the molecular structure of water, two molecules of hydrogen and one molecule of oxygen, H₂O. But on a hot, humid summer afternoon of doing yard work or life-guarding or getting married, that wonderful knowledge doesn't satisfy you one bit. You need a tall, cool glass of water to drink. (*Give them a glass of water.*) The two of you have spent years learning about God's love for you and all people; now you get to experience that love in a new and exciting and fulfilling way in your marriage.

Paul speaks of **FOUR DIMENSIONS OF GOD'S LOVE** for you. The first is **WIDTH**. You know that God's love is so wide it includes all people. Therefore you know that God loves you, even when you are mean, selfish, and sinful. And you know God forgives you for Jesus' sake. But you'll drink the width of God's love when you extend that love to David even when he leaves his dirty socks in the middle of the bedroom floor...again, and even when Anne wants to talk in the middle of the Michigan-Ohio State game.

The next dimension of God's love is its **LENGTH**. You know the lengths Jesus went to in order to save you. **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13) NIV84.** It also means that God's love doesn't give up. Mine sure does! When I offer people love they have a certain amount of time to respond and if they don't, forget it! God isn't like that—his love is more enduring than the Energizer bunny—it just keeps on going and going and going! God doesn't give up on us. Never

give up on each other. Go to great lengths to speak and show your love to each other. Every morning before you go to work, every night before you go to sleep, make sure your partner knows you love him, you love her—no matter what he or she has done that day. God's love is so wide, it embraces everyone; it is so long that it will never let us go.

Then there is the HEIGHT of God's love. This word can mean not only how tall something is in inches or feet, but that it is the utmost of something, the best there is. We always want the best. Take coffee, for instance. People will pay 2, 3, even 5 times as much for a cup of Starbucks over a cup of regular coffee, because Starbucks is perceived as the best. In God, we experience the richest, purest, highest, finest love there is...and it's all free for all people. The two of you have chosen to devote your lives to sharing that love with others. Don't forget to share the height of God's love with one another. God's love is so wide it embraces everyone; it is so long it will never let us go; it is of such high quality it will never let us down.

Finally, there is the DEPTH of God's love. The depth of God's love reaches to the deepest parts of our being. All of us have locked closets and dark corners where we don't even like to peek ourselves, let alone have anybody else take a look. They are the places we have shut off from the light of day, the light of the love of even those who are closest to us. We do it because we're afraid that if someone sees those deep down ugly parts of us, they won't love us anymore, and we just can't risk that. But God's love is deeper than our deepest secrets. It penetrates the darkness of our worst fears. It cleans out the closets of sin, of despair, of self-hatred. Share the depth of God's love with each other.

God loves you and he wants you to experience the four dimensions of his love so that you can share the width, length, height, and depth of his love with one another all the days of your life. Amen.

Wedding S ermon
for
Anne Marie Z ietlow
and
R ichard D avid S tarr

J une 22, 2012

S t. J ohn E v. L utheran Church
Montello, Wisconsin

T he F our D imensions of G od's L ove
E phesians 3:14-19

Pastor R ichard D . S tarr