

Love of God and how to achieve it (part 1 of 2)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Love is such a rich phenomenon that some scholars suggest that it has no definition, it is known only by its effects. Love is categorised into different types in Islaamic worldview. Some forms of love are healthy and encouraged, yet others are blameworthy. Some people or things we love are natural and we have no control over, whereas others build over time and develop into strong relationships.

The first type of love is emotional love, such as the love for one's parents, children, and spouse. However it may vary in a sense, for example, the love of a mother for her child will be different from the love one has towards his or her spouse. In married couples, the love will be stronger if the spouse has qualities valued by the other like beauty, wealth, stability, or religious commitment. This type of love is not within one's control. One is not responsible in front of Allaah for loving one child more than the others.¹

Love for one's parents is also natural since a child has an innate inclination to love his parents. A child gets love and security from them and realises the hardship they went through to raise them. By extension, one also loves his relatives and family members.

The second type of love is romantic love which can further divided into two types. The first type is when someone is in love with another person, yet the person fears Allaah, and does not indulge in anything Allaah has forbidden and remains chaste. The best solution for someone genuinely in love is to get married to the person if possible. If it is not meant to be, one must turn away from them for fear of falling into something forbidden by Allaah.

The second type is when romantic love turns into an obsession. Obsessions in most cases take control of the person and become their main purpose of existence. Thus obsessive 'love' is forbidden and sinful. Scholars consider it to be an ailment of the heart that afflicts a heart empty of Allaah's love. Islaamic Law has laid many safety nets to protect people from such destructive emotions that they themselves cannot control.

The last category is the most sublime and pure form of love, the love of Allaah. A Muslim should keep a few simple points in their mind:

¹ The parent is not, however, allowed to favour one child over another in terms of gifts or treatment. Islaam requires that all children must be treated equally. Loving one child over another is simply a matter of the heart that one has no control over.

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First, love of Allaah is not optional; it is required of every Muslim. It is an integral component of one's faith as Allaah states in the Qur'aan:

[“...But those who believe, love Allaah more (than anything else)....”]²

Second, love of Allaah is different from all the above categories of love. Love of Allaah is not a claim to be made; it is something that resides in the heart. The learned scholars of Islaam consider love to be an 'action' of the heart, something that actually motivates the heart and moves a person to obey Allaah and leave sins. Love of Allaah is strongly related with the concept of worship in Islaam and one's faith. Worship is the fruit of a person's love of Allaah, and love of Allaah in reciprocate is its aim. Love is the fuel behind worship that keeps it from becoming a habit. ALL acts of devotion, worship, and obedience spring from its fountain. The very definition of worship states that it is everything Allaah loves and is pleased with. Love enters every good work we do. When we offer Salaah, read Qur'aan, fast, perform Hajj, give charity, or remember Allaah, His love should be part of it.

Third, love of Allaah is different from natural, emotional types of love described above. True love of Allaah is always combined with a feeling of awe in front of divine majesty and glory, a feeling of insignificance in front of divine might. On the other hand, love for one's spouse or child is not coupled with such feelings of awe. What this means is that a person does not just say, 'I love God' and leave it there, but actually carries out what Allaah loves and leaves what Allaah has forbidden, because a person realises Allaah's might and ability to punish.

Fourth, love of Allaah supersedes love for anyone else. Whenever there is a conflict between the two, a person must give precedence to what Allaah loves.

Fifth, the more a person obeys Allaah and worships Him the more his love for Allaah will grow.

² Qur'aan [2:165]