

Bible and the Headlines: Love Is

David Bachelor, PhD

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Saturday was Valentine's Day, so it was no surprise to find that romantic love featured in the headlines. The stories sampled in this piece were published on Valentine's Day and each look at a different aspect of romantic love. One is kitschy; another scientific; the last one is sentimental. These tales demonstrate that love, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder.

Philadelphia's 6ABC Action News reported, "Weddings, Photo Ops and Love on Display at Love Park this Valentine's Day." In Philadelphia, it is a Valentine's Day tradition that weddings are performed at the LOVE Statue in front of City Hall. The reporter noted each couple, ". . . were allotted 30 minutes, and Parks & Rec provided an officiant from Journeys of the Heart." Ten couples used this event to make or renew their vows.

Scientific American examined a recent Kinsey Institute study of single Americans. Based on its findings the journal offered, "How Often Do People Fall Passionately in Love? The Answer May Be Less than You Think." Lead researcher for the study offered this definition of 'passionate love,' "It's that first feeling of magnetism to a partner, that feeling of obsession—just this intense longing to be together." While most of the respondents had experienced passionate love twice in their lives, one in six subjects had never experienced such love at all.

For this holiday, the New York Times offered, "The Objects We Keep for Love." The piece was a compilation of readers' anecdotes about their sentimental keepsakes. The editor noted, "On their own, these items might seem insignificant. But they hold deep meaning to the people who have kept them as a memento of love." The readers' stories, ". . . were poignant, funny, uplifting and often sad, sometimes all at once." These heirlooms did not have to be expensive to be priceless.

The Bible has an entire book devoted to romantic love. It is called by various names depending on the translation, the Song of Songs, the Songs of Solomon, or the Canticles. The book, attributed to King Solomon, is a collection of love poems written in the voices of a Shulamite woman, a shepherd king and a group of advisor friends. A piece of advice (appropriate for Valentine's Day) is repeated throughout the book, "Do not awaken love before its time" (2:7; 3:5; 8:4).

The New Testament defines the attributes of love. In the first letter to the church in Corinth, Christians are told, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Love does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs" (1Cor 13:4-5). Love is among a trio of gifts from God, and believers are told, "Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1Cor 13:13).

I remain unconvinced that Valentine is a saint who merits a day on the calendar. However, I understand the sentiment of the New York Times article about sentimental heirlooms. When I look at the Cross, I remember God's love for me.