



Introduction

In my last article, I wrote about God's four gifts of love...[For an Everlasting Love, Seek God's Four Gifts of Love \(catholic365.com\)](http://catholic365.com). This article is the flip side and is, unfortunately, quite darker. This article looks at why someone who says they love us would physically abuse us, why marriages fail, why families fall apart, why love hurts. It's not pleasant. But learning to recognize a relationship based on counterfeit love and then leaving quickly can spare us harm...physically, mentally and spiritually. If love does not last, it is not true love.

"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Satan is the great deceiver. Whatever is good...whatever is light...whatever is of God...Satan will counterfeit, so as to destroy. For every gift of love from God, the devil has a counterfeit. We might think of hate as the opposite of love. But I think of hate as what we get in the vacuum of our soul when God's love is not present at all. God's love builds, unites and brings joy. So, the opposite of God's love would be love that destroys, tears apart and brings despair. This is love to avoid.

In my last article, I used four Greek words to describe love as gifts from God. Let's look at another four Greek words that describe counterfeit love, and compare them to God's gifts of love.

Mania – Selfish love

Mania is the counterfeit to agape. Agape gives and sacrifices. Mania takes and demands. Mania is selfish and controlling, possessive, obsessive and jealous. *Mania* is the origin of the word "maniac".

Mania manifests itself with excessive or unreasonable desires and easily turns to anger. For example, becoming angry when the other person does not immediately answer calls or texts, becoming jealous when the other person is seen with someone else, demanding to always know where the other person is going and when they will return. Mania can be identified by lack of trust and lack of respect. Take everything that agape is, and if the opposite is going on it could be Mania.

Nobody would fall to mania if it manifested itself early in a relationship. Mania creeps in slowly and is not often evident until later. Mania waits until feelings of love are deep enough that it can get away with it, until it is too late. Then, anger may turn to physical or mental abuse. A trip to the hospital is not uncommon. Mania then uses threats and fear to keep the relationship going and the other person is stuck. This is why a manic relationship must be ended at the first sign of mania. Even one occurrence of physical or mental abuse should be a trigger to end the relationship. The "maniac" is not going to change, regardless of what they tell us.

Mania might tell us "I love you"; but what it really means is "I own you!"

Ludus – Playful love

Ludus is the counterfeit to phileo. Phileo is affection for a friend. Ludus is enjoyment of an activity with less regard for the friend. Examples of ludus include being "drinking buddies" or engaging in casual sex. *Ludus* is the origin of the word "ludicrous".

Ludus abandons friends easily because there is no real bond of affection. If we stop engaging in the fun activity, the friend drops us and moves on. A good litmus test of friendship is to ask the friend if they would like to attend Mass together or a Christian retreat. Refusal to engage in "non-fun" activities,



especially spiritual in nature, is a sure sign of ludus. Before we were married, my wife and I were certain of our phileo for each other when her parents volunteered to send us to a weekend Christian retreat, and we both looked forward to attending and learning together. We are still married over 40 years later.

Most friendships begin with common interests and common activities. The cheerleaders all hung out together, people in the chess club together, I liked to play baseball. Friendships grow, and ludus grows. Ludus is not prone to fear and anger, like mania. The real problem with ludus is thinking someone is a friend and then getting "back stabbed". The ability to recognize and end a "ludicrous" relationship might save us some sadness and mental anguish. Marrying someone based on a "ludicrous" relationship can easily end in divorce when the fun ends.

Ludus might tell us "I love you"; but what it really means is "Let's party!"

Eros – Lustful love

Eros is the counterfeit to storge. At first, one might not easily get the connection; but Eros destroys families. We like to think of eros as Cupid, bringing romance and passion; but Satan's counterfeit goes beyond romance. Up to 40% of all divorces are linked to infidelity. Chances of a divorce double when one partner engages in pornography. Eros is the inability to control passions and destroys the sanctity of marriage through pre-marital sex. *Eros* is the origin of the word "erotic".

Eros can be difficult to identify. Eros is secretive and tries very hard not to get caught. Some relationships have appeared to be normal before marriage, but after marriage the terrible truth is finally revealed. Indications of eros can include "wandering eyes" or inappropriate touching of others. "It's only in fun" and "It's only natural" are not excuses. These are indications of weakness, cracks that need to be plugged before the building falls down.

A definite red flag to eros is if the other person insists on physical intimacy before marriage. And then, if we do not comply, pressures us by questioning our love for them. Their love for us is not agape and not phileo, it is selfish and self-pleasing. Their accusations are only a ploy to get what they really want. It is best to agree with them, that we do not love them that way; and move on. Otherwise, after marriage, their pleasure seeking might lead them somewhere else. When pre-marital sex results in an "unwanted" child and then abortion, Satan has won the battle against the family.

Eros might tell us "I love you"; but what it really means is "I love pleasure!"

Narke – Self-centered love

Narke is the counterfeit to philautia. Narke is being obsessed with oneself, self-centered and egotistical. *Narke* is the origin of the words "narcissist" and "narcotic", meaning "numb".

A self-absorbed person is truly numb to others around them. They are unable to see the needs of others and are not willing to sacrifice anything for another person. Others must earn their love, they are never wrong and other people are "out to get them".

Narke may sometimes appear to be mania. As philautia is a mirror of agape but directed to self, narke is a mirror of mania but directed to self. Narke can be jealous and lacking of trust. It might also result in physical or mental abuse. When the "narcissist" is getting what they want from the relationship, they do



not want the relationship to end. The difference between mania and narke is mania wants to control while narke wants worshiped. Narke is incapable of loving others. Marriage to a "narcissist" should be avoided as only one person in the relationship will ever be pleased. Any relationship showing signs of narke should be ended.

Narke might tell us "I love you"; but what it really means is "I love myself!"

Conclusion

God made us in love, for love, to love. The devil prowls about the world seeking to destroy love. We need to be on guard against the devil's counterfeit versions of love that would destroy us. We need to seek the true gifts of God's love. Feelings can never be removed from relationships; but feelings should not blind us nor be the entire basis of a relationship. Otherwise, we open ourselves up to counterfeit love.

All forms of counterfeit love take time to become evident. They say, if you put a frog directly into hot water it will immediately jump out, but if you put the frog into cool water and boil the water slowly, the frog will not jump out and will die. (Sorry for the gross analogy, but it best describes how Satan's counterfeits of love slowly destroy.) To guard ourselves, we must be patient in love and not rush into relationships or marriage too quickly. We must first be certain our relationship is based on God's gifts of love...be certain that love builds, unites and brings joy. Do not allow what appears to be love to destroy you.