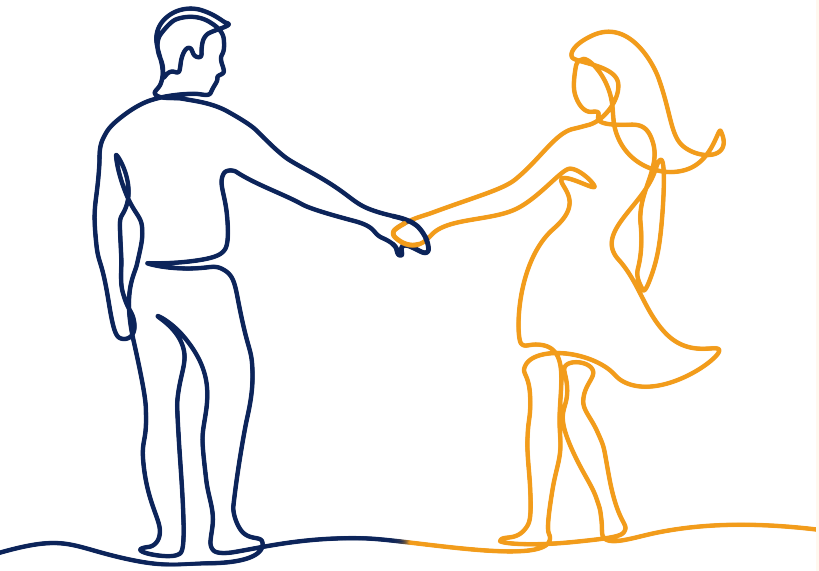
HEALING THE CULTURE



Four Levels of *Love*

Love allows us to forgive, to care for those in need, and to be compassionate toward those who are vulnerable.

Each of us has a natural desire to love and to be loved. In fact, love is the most common theme of human creativity, celebrated in the art, poetry, music, and literature of every age and culture. Love defines who we are as human persons; when we fail to understand its true meaning, we deprive ourselves of the greatest power we possess. levels at the expense of the higher ones.

An unhealthy culture depicts love as physical, sexual, and focused on the self, leaving little room for commitment and contribution. A healthy culture views love as commitment and contribution to each other, to the world, and to our faith.

How do YOU love?

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Love Level 1

Love makes me feel good

Level 1 love focuses on the physical. Love is a positive feeling. While there's nothing wrong with "loving" the way someone makes you feel, or "loving" a puppy dog because it's cute, our relationships need more, or they will be shallow and unfulfilling. It often substitutes love for lust, and we end up thinking of our "beloved" as an object, rather than as a unique person made by God.

Love Level 2

Love makes me feel good about myself

Level 2 love equates love with being admired. It says: "I love you because you think I'm pretty, talented, smart, strong." Even if we want to be powerful and respected for a good reason, using the other person to enhance our own image is not love. We can end up seeing our "beloved" as a trophy, not a human being. We may not be open to children or commitment, wanting to keep our options open "if something better comes along."

Love Level 3

I love you more than I love myself

Level 3 love focuses on the needs of the other person. It says: "I love you; therefore, I am willing to put your needs ahead of my own." It looks beyond the superficial, and we see our "beloved" as a unique person. We realize that without commitment (i.e., marriage), there will not be enough trust to keep a sexual relationship healthy and to avoid using the other person as an object.

Love Level 4

Love sees the image of God in every person

Level 4 love is the ability to see the image of God in every person, despite his or her faults and weaknesses, and because of that, we want that person's greatest, ultimate good. We recognize that every person was made to be loved into all eternity by God, and we will value and protect every human being, regardless of wealth, status, abilty, or age.