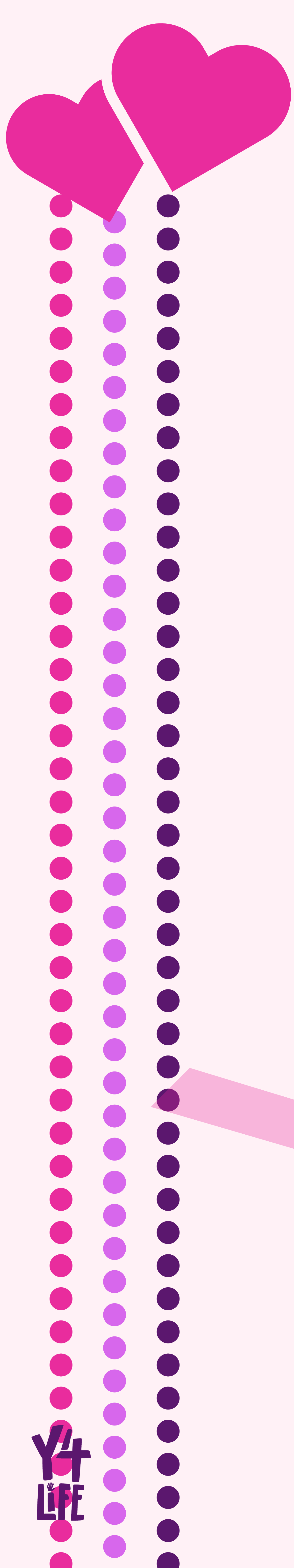


# Real Love

## Real Life





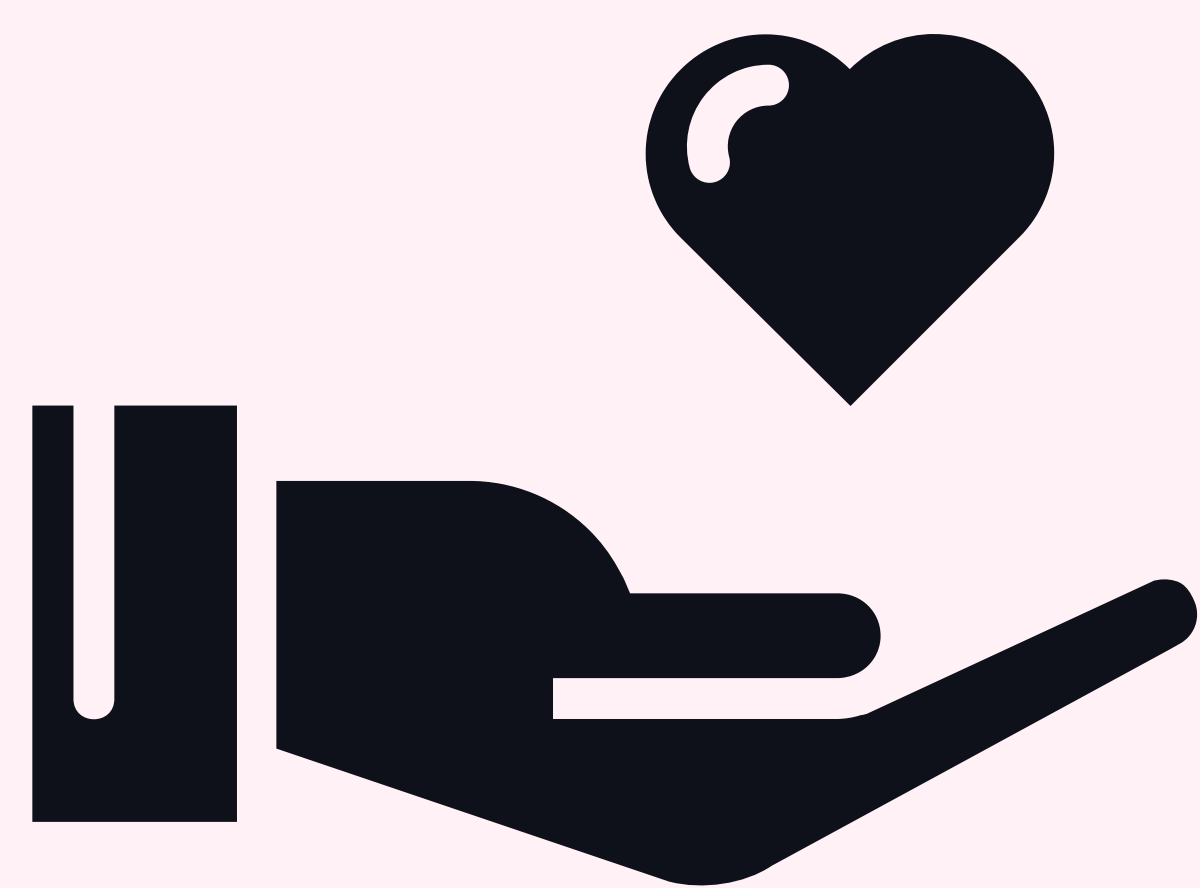
**Love.** We think about it. We want it.  
We wonder when we'll find it.  
We wonder IF we'll find it.

Sometimes we see it work wonderfully ...  
and sometimes we see it fall apart. And  
when it does fall apart, it hurts. Relationships  
break; hearts break; people break.

**Is love really all it's cracked up to be?**







The simple answer is, **YES!** God desires to give His people love, and one of the ways He provides the blessing of love is through marriage. But how do we know when we've found real love? How do we show real love to our spouse? How do we love as God intended?



First, we need to know what real love looks like, what it is and what it isn't. We need to know how to spot it, how to grow it, and how to give it. Interested in learning more about **REAL LOVE?**

***Read on, young lover!***



# Real love is God's kind of love: Agape love.



Real love is NOT a romcom or Hallmark movie. It's NOT passionate, intense, selfish, and temporary. It's NOT an "until someone else makes me happier" type of love.

Real love is a forever love, a love that remains even when life is difficult. Real love is a union that lasts until death which causes lovers in real love to part. Even after death, the person who remains alive still loves the person who has passed away even as he or she moves forward in life. **Real love wasn't ever meant to end.**





# According to 1 Corinthians 13, real love has a distinct look. Real love . . .

- ...is patient and kind
- ...bears burdens
- ...trusts and protects
- ...endures through hardships
- ...believes in what is good
- ...is founded on hope
- ...seeks the truth and is always loyal



# The Bible even tells us what it's NOT so that there is no confusion. Real love . . .

- ...is not envious or boastful
- ...is not rude or selfish
- ...does not easily become angry or insist on its own way
- ...does not hold a grudge
- ...does not rejoice in doing wrong or encourage sin





# Real love starts with friendship.

Contrary to popular belief, real love doesn't begin with sexual attraction. **That's real lust, not real love.** Now desire isn't bad; it can be a gift of God. But when desire for another's body is the only aspect that defines what you're calling love, **then you haven't found it.**

Marriages based solely on desire are bound to fall apart. If a man and woman have nothing in common except sexual desire, what will be left when sex is no longer a strong enough reason to stay together?  
**Nothing.**





A relationship that lasts is **founded on friendship**. What do you look for in a good friend? Which qualities make an excellent companion? If you make a list of these attributes, you'll know what you're looking for in a spouse. And when you know what you want, it's unwise to date someone who doesn't have the most important qualities you're looking for. Here's a quick rule of thumb for finding real love: **Only date people who would make a good spouse.**

But how will you know if he or she will be a good spouse? That's easy. **Take time to become friends first.** Discover who he or she really is; notice her faults and his foibles, her strengths and his gifts. As you become friends, you'll have a better sense of whether or not you can love this person for the rest of your life.





No one is perfect, but as a future spouse, your job is to decide whether or not you can live with the imperfections you see, to love your spouse despite them, and more than that, to rejoice in the person God has handcrafted and blessed with dreams and talents of his or her own.



**Remember:** we marry who we date, so only date people you'd be willing to spend your life with.



**Real love is an action rather  
than a feeling.**



It's exciting to feel the first bloom of love, isn't it?  
The butterflies in the stomach, the rush when  
you're hands touch, the beginning when your  
eyes meet ... it's exhilarating!  
But we all know, these feelings can't last.  
**New love doesn't last forever.**

Eventually the drudgery hits. He gets sick; she's stressed out. He hurts her feelings when he doesn't include her. She has unrealistic expectations. Humans sin, and when they sin, they hurt each other.

Despite sin, real love doesn't change; instead, it forgives. **Loving someone is a decision that results in permanent action**; it's not a rollercoaster of surging and waning devotion.

**Real love seeks to meet the needs of the other**, and because it's an action, real love can be seen. It looks like this: a husband vacuuming after working all day and a mom cooking dinner when she doesn't feel well. It looks like a friend attending your basketball game even though he or she isn't really into basketball.

And it looks like a girlfriend or boyfriend who doesn't pressure you to have sex before marriage.





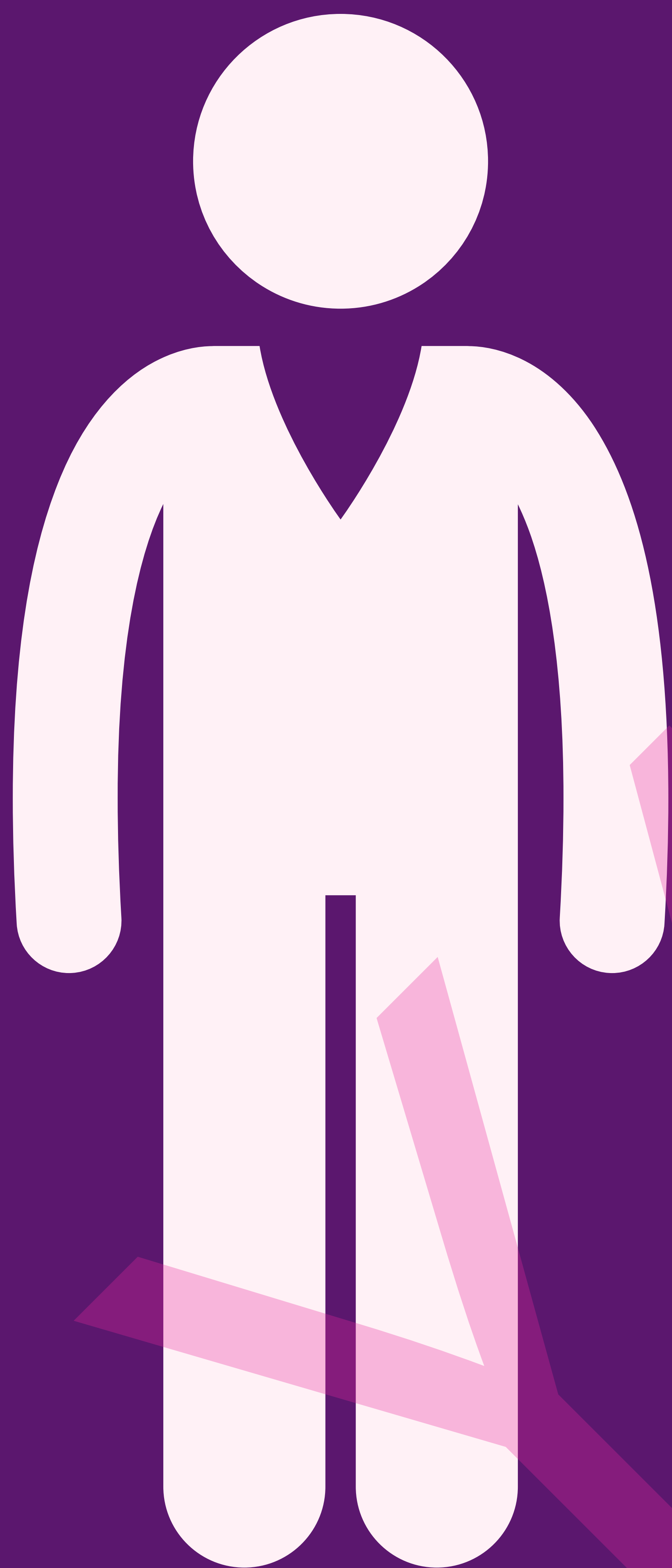
Real love means setting aside one's selfish desires and seeking to serve instead.

# Why?

Because real love is **sacrificial**.

Real love, above all, is **sacrificial**; it places the needs of another above the needs of self. After all, isn't God the definition of love? Didn't Jesus give the ultimate sacrifice? When a man and a woman love each other, **their actions are sacrificial rather than selfish**.





A man in love seeks to serve his beloved above himself. It's sacrificial. His love manifests itself in many ways: it provides **protection, provision, and spiritual leadership** for his family. A man's love is **kind, compassionate, and supportive**; it places the needs of his wife and family above his own. His toil is for her good. A man who loves his wife recognizes that she is "**far more precious than jewels**," and she is a gift entrusted to him. (Proverbs 31:10). Even more, Ephesians 5:28–32 reminds future husbands that they are to love their wives as themselves, serving and clinging to her above all other members of his family.



A woman in love also seeks to serve her beloved above herself. Her love manifests itself in many ways: It provides **comfort, care, support, and concern**. A woman's love does good rather than harm to her husband and family; she protects and supports their reputations, their health, their wellbeing. She shows love and respect to her husband. According to **Proverbs 31**, a woman who loves her husband is a hard worker, providing nourishment and clothing for her family. She manages the household, provides wisdom and kindness, and brings joy to the home.



***In both cases, real love means service.  
Real love is always sacrificial.***

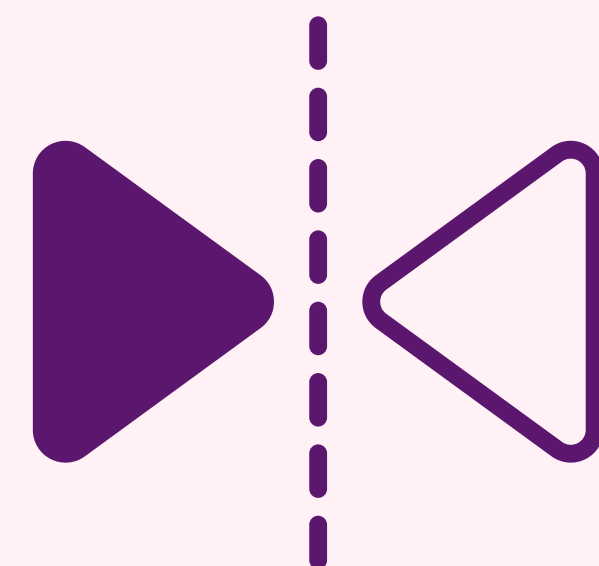
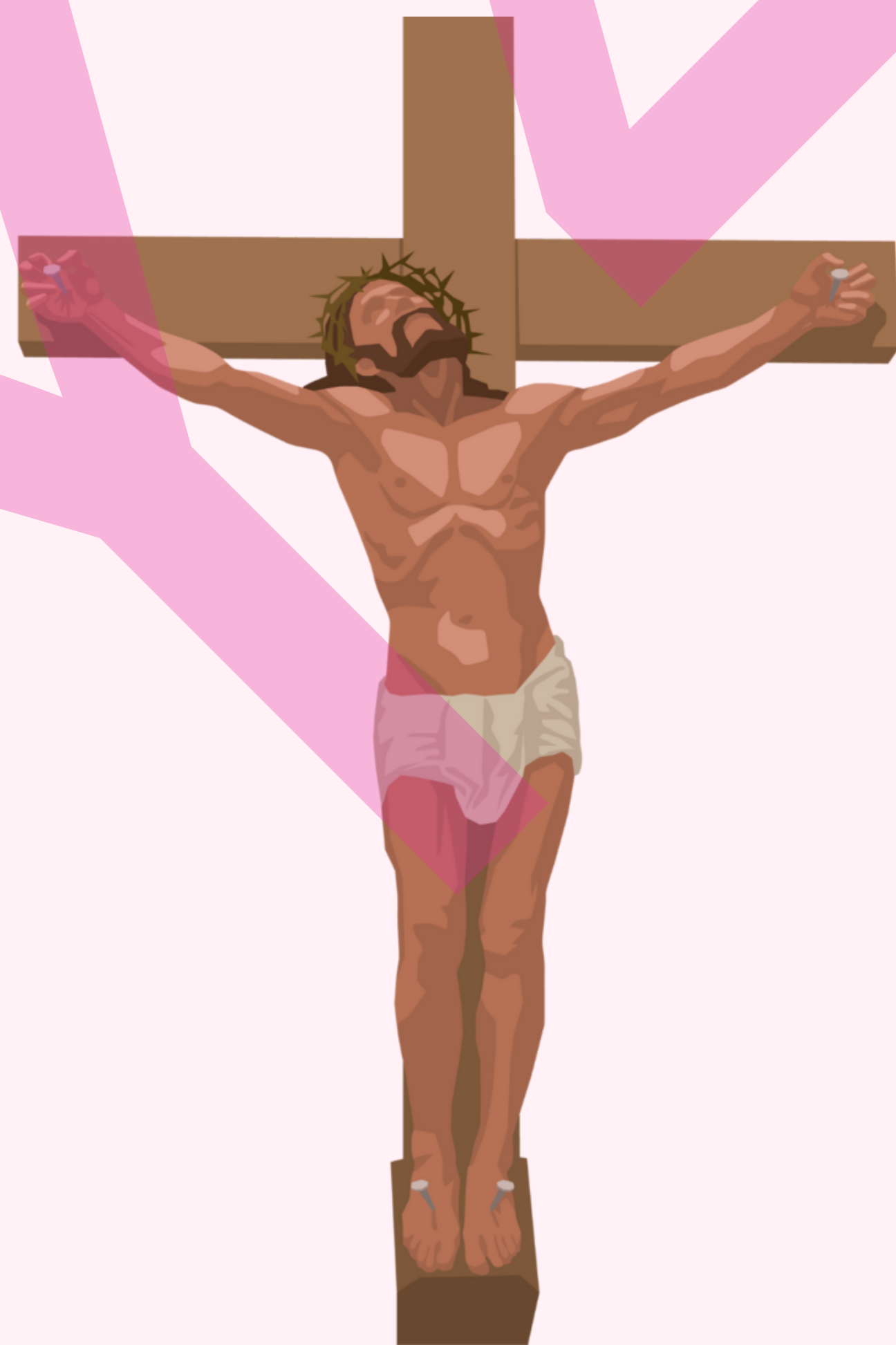


# Real love is worth dying for.

Real love is much more compelling than a feeling; **it is a gift of service that begets love and service in return.**

Real love is an action that eventually results in a one-flesh union between husband and wife, a union that provides a firm foundation for children and family and benefits both community and world.

**Real love is a reflection of Christ and the Church, a picture of perfect service.** In fact, Ephesians 5:25 tells us that a man's love for his wife should reflect Christ's love for the Church so much that he would be willing to die for her and for those in his care. **That's a powerful love!** It's a love that makes loving in return desirable and effortless.





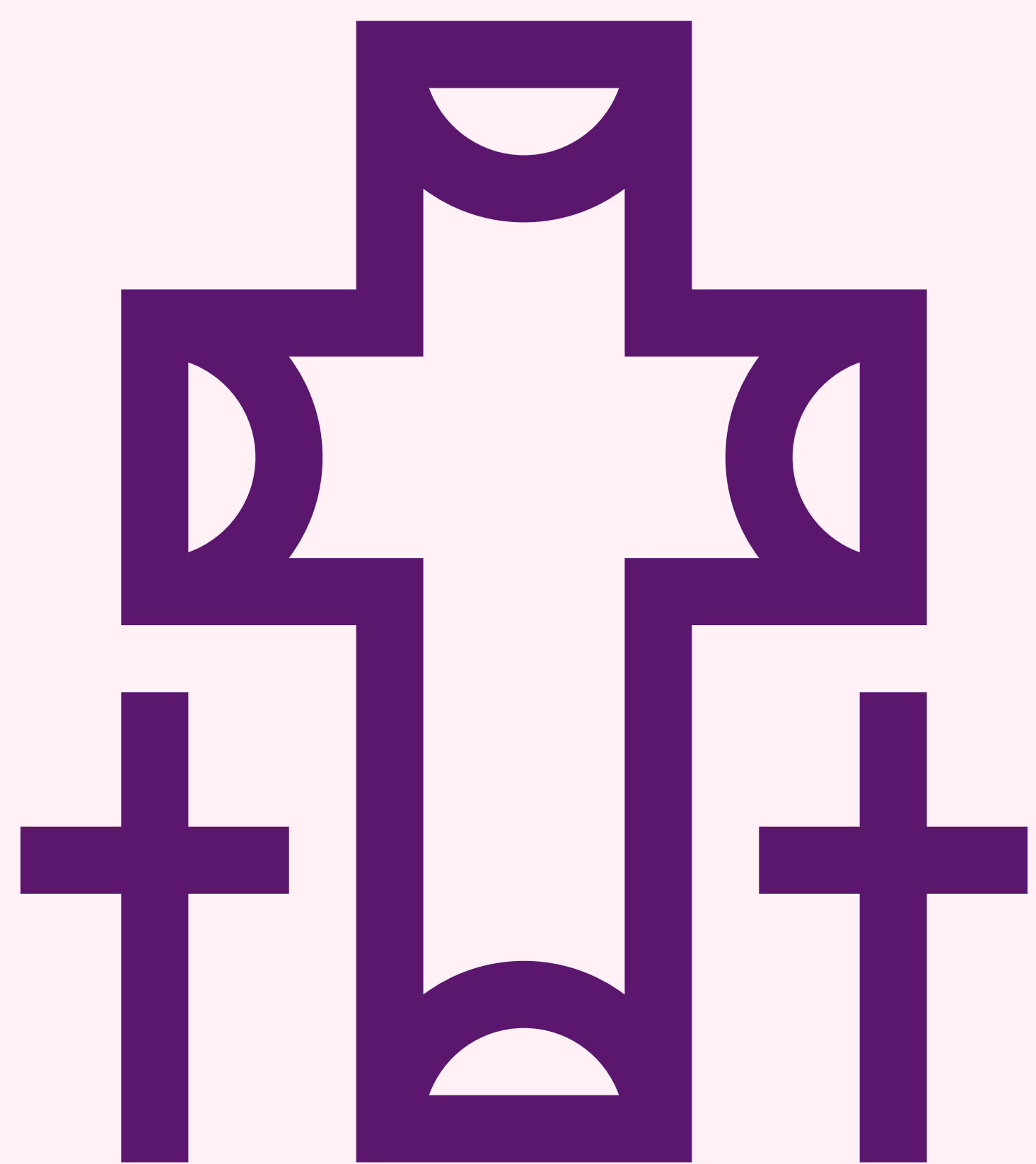
# Is real love really possible?

The answer, quite simply, is **YES!** You've already witnessed this love in the actions of Christ. This real love was showered on you in your Baptism, and it surrounds you each day of your life. God's *agape* love is **sacrificial and active**. His actions prove His great and eternal love for you.

## How can we love like God commands? How can we love our spouse perfectly?

As imperfect beings, we won't ever be able to love others perfectly this side of heaven. But by God's grace, we are able to reflect His love to others; we are able to show care, concern, and compassion. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are able to place the needs of others above our own, to bear burdens and rejoice in what is good. **Because God loved us first, we can choose to love others.**





And when we don't love as we should? Then we head boldly toward the means of grace and forgiveness. We cling to the ark of Christ in our baptismal waters, rejoicing that God has drowned the old Adam in us again and again, and celebrating the new life we've been given each and every morning.

**And we begin again, in real love and service to others.**

***"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."***

**(Ephesians 5:1-2)**

