

INTRODUCTION

During World War II when the Nazis were bombing London, there was an Anglican Church that had a statue of Jesus with his arms outstretched on their lawn. The caption below the statue read, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden." As the bombs fell, the Anglican Church was destroyed and the statue was blown up. When the members started to rebuild the church and replace the statue, they discovered the arms and hands were so pulverized from the bombing they could not be salvaged. They could have chosen to manufacture new hands and arms for the statue, but they chose not to.

Today, the statue of Jesus Christ stands outside the London church with no arms, and the caption has been changed to read, "Christ has no hands but your hands. And Christ has no arms but our arms." We are the body of Christ, and if the body of Christ is going to move, it is going to be by our feet. If the body of Christ is going to hug, it is going to be by our arms. If the body of Christ is going to speak, it is going to be through our mouth. We are the body of Christ.

Please open your Bibles to Romans 12. As we have been talking about the past few Sundays, each one of us is a part of the body of Christ. You have a special function that nobody else has. Just like a hand does something that the foot can't do. You have a function.

Last week we talked about spiritual gifts. If you are a Christian, you have one or more spiritual gifts that enable you to do something very special in the body. When you discover what your gifts are and start doing them; that is when the body of Christ becomes healthy and active. One of the greatest frustrations in the church today occurs when people are doing the wrong thing. They are trying to be a hand when they are a foot.

I heard a story about a duck, a rabbit and a squirrel who decided they were going to improve the world, so they started a school where they would teach three subjects: swimming, running and climbing. You know the duck could swim wonderfully, but the duck couldn't run very well. Every time he tried to run, it looked more like a waddle. So the duck stopped swimming to take classes in running. He never got much better, and his little webbed feet got so bruised from trying to run that before long, he couldn't even swim very well.

The rabbit could run like the wind, but the rabbit wasn't very good at climbing trees. So he decided he would concentrate all his time and energy on learning to climb trees. He would take a running start, jump up on the tree and slide down the bark. His forepaws became so bruised and bloody that before long, he couldn't even run.

The squirrel could climb trees like no tomorrow, but because he could not swim very well, he decided he would take swimming lessons. He would jump into the water and squirrel paddle as hard as he could and he would come out looking like a drowned squirrel. Before long, all three were terribly frustrated. You say, "Why didn't the duck just swim and the squirrel just climb and the rabbit just run?" Well, that's a good idea. I just wonder why, in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the teachers don't just teach and the encouragers don't just encourage and the servants don't just serve.

You see, God has given you a special gift to use in the body of Christ. When that happens, the church is healthy. But having talked about spiritual gifts, Paul now turns to his next big subject. Would you look at Romans 12:9? The first word is the word "love." It is kind of interesting that in 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul is talking about spiritual gifts, immediately he goes to 1 Corinthians 13 that talks about a more excellent way, love. He said, "You can talk like men and angels, you can have the gift of knowledge, the gift of prophecy, you can even give your body to be burned at the stake, but if you don't have love, he says, you are zilch, zero, sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal."

He does the same thing here in Romans 12. He talks about spiritual gifts, spiritual gifts, spiritual gifts. He comes to verse 9 and says, "I want to show you a more excellent way. The greatest of these is love." Let's look at it. "Love must be sincere." Now, to kind of look ahead a little bit, the entire remainder of chapter 12 is a commentary on that one statement, what real love is. What follows are 25 succinct characteristics of sincere love. He shoots them machine gun style, "Bam! Bam! Bam!" We're going to look at four of them today.

Romans 12:9-10, "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." Now, how do we find out what real love is? We find out from the Bible.

I. REAL LOVE IS SINCERE

1. *Sine cere* means "no wax"

Let's learn four characteristics of real love. Number one, love, real love is sincere. That is what it says in verse 9. In other words, phony love doesn't cut it in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me explain these two words for you. First is the English word, "sincere" which comes from two Latin words, "sine cere." Those of you who are taking Latin, you know the word sincere means, "no wax." Back in the time that Latin was used, potters would sometimes take wax and fill in the gaps and the holes in broken or cracked pottery. Then they would paint over the wax and sell it. The only problem is, once you bought it and put soup or hot water in that pot that had wax on it, guess what is going to happen? It is going to crack apart. So these potters started selling their pottery, and they made this claim. They would say "sine cere," no wax, this is pure pottery. So sincere was good. When it talks about our love, there should be no cracks, no wax, no phony love.

2. *A huprokritos* means "no masks"

There is another word that Paul uses here, the Greek word "a huprokritos." That word is a word from which we get our English word hypocrite, which means no masks. For those of you who like drama or theater, did you know our English word hypocrite comes from this word? It was a word used in the ancient theater, because oftentimes they wouldn't use full costumes to play a part, but an actor would hold the mask up in front of his face and play different parts by holding up different masks. The harshest words Jesus Christ ever uttered, at least recorded in the Bible, he directed towards hypocrites. He said, "You hypocrites, you bunch of rattlesnakes." That is what he called hypocrites. Our love should not be hypocritical; it should be "a huprokritos." "A"

cancels it out. That means that you should not wear a mask when you tell somebody that you love them.

In the 1960s, there was a group called Undisputed Truth. They recorded a song: "Smiling faces hide the traces of the evil that lurks behind." Sometimes a smiling face cannot truly show what a person is feeling, but sometimes a smiling face is good. In fact, I have come up with a new product I am going to market. It is called Smile-On-A-Stick. Here it is ladies and gentlemen, Smile-On-A-Stick. This is what you need if you have a problem with getting angry at all those other drivers. You are driving around Loop 323, and somebody cuts you off, and then you pull up to the red light, and they are right next to you. This is what you do. You pull out Smile-On-A-Stick, stick it up like this and say, "You moron, where did you learn how to drive?" You can be so mad and can pretty much say anything you want to, but you have Smile-On-A-Stick, and it works. Somebody could make money on this thing. In fact, Mike is always trying to get the choir members to smile, so ladies, try those on. You look great. If you would like one of these, they're \$19.95, plus shipping and handling. Operators are standing by, 1-800-FAKE-SMILE.

The Bible says that should not be the case. Our smile should not be behind a mask; it should not be fake. It ought to be genuine. If your love is full of cracks and wax or behind a mask, that is not the kind of love that God wants us to show.

II. REAL LOVE DISCRIMINATES

The second characteristic of real love is, real love discriminates. You say, "Wait a minute, I thought that word "discrimination" was a bad word. That's the D word. Aren't there all kinds of anti-discrimination laws?" Well, I'm here to say that, of course racial or social discrimination is a sin. But the word "discriminate" is a good word. It means to separate one thing from another. When the Bible says we love, it doesn't mean that we just love everything. It means we must discriminate about that which we love. In fact, would you look there in verse 9. It says, "hate what is evil, cling to what is good."

In Proverbs 8:13, the writer of Proverbs says, "To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech." Some people would think that if you're a loving person that means you can't hate anything. Wrong. It means if you are a loving person, there are a lot of things that you will hate. You will hate evil, you will hate pride, you will hate arrogance, evil behavior, perverse speech. You see, there are some characteristics of God's love that the world doesn't understand.

1. God's love rejects evil

You see, we have conjured up some kind of mushy, sentimentality where we feel warm fuzzies about everything and everybody and we call it love. No, folks, that is sentimentality; that is not true love. Real love recognizes evil, and when it sees evil, it abhors it. It hates it. It turns away from it. It rejects it. A problem in our world today, is that our culture is trying to give us one definition of evil that is different from the definition of evil in the Bible.

You see, the world pretty much says everything is okay as long as you are not hurting somebody else. It doesn't matter what you do as long as you are not hurting somebody else. It cannot be evil. But the word of God says there are some things that are good and some things that are bad, and the Bible needs to be our standard of what is evil and what is good.

Some of you who have studied literature recognize the name of Alexander Pope, who was an 18th century English poet. He was one of the best translators of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but he also wrote a tremendous essay called, "Essay on Man." Listen to what he says in four lines about how we get used to evil and wickedness. Alexander Pope writes, "Vice [that means evil] is a monster of so frightful mien, that to be hated, it first must be seen. Yet to be seen too often, and familiar with her face, we first endure, then pity, then embrace." That's a profound statement about evil. You've first got to recognize evil. But the problem is, if you're exposed to evil too many times, you become familiar with it. Once familiar with it, you put up with it, then you pity it, then you embrace it.

In our society right now, there are things you watch on television or movies that 30 years ago would have caused people to get up and walk out or turn off their sets. Why do we just accept it today? We've gotten used to it. We've seen so much of it that we just put up with it. The things that used to shock us just put us to sleep now. The things that used to amaze us amuse us today. We've gotten used to wickedness. The Bible says we have got to hate wickedness. Before we hate it, we have to recognize it. So real love rejects evil.

2. God's love clings to good

It turns away from that which is evil, but it grabs hold and embraces that which is good. That word "clings" in verse 9 means to stick to, like glue. It is an inseparable bond.

There are people today in America that would call me a bigoted homophobic person because I stand up and say that homosexual behavior and practice is evil according to God's word. They say, "We're not hurting anybody, isn't it okay?" I'm not using that as my standard of good and bad. I'm using the word of God and what it says about it. And of course, we love homosexuals, we love everybody, because Jesus loves everybody, but we cannot accept nor condone that kind of behavior.

In the Tyler paper this week, I read about a mainline denomination in America, in a 24-14 vote, the church Order and Ministry Committee of this denomination recommended striking a clause from the church's constitution that forbids the ordination of self-affirming, practicing homosexuals to the ministry. In other words, this denomination has a policy, like we do as Baptists, that they're not going to ordain homosexuals. Well, this committee says, we're going to recommend that that be done away with, that we begin to ordain self-professing homosexuals. Reverend Don Stroud, who is an openly gay minister, says, "I am pleasantly surprised by this. Our churches are put in the situation where they're not in accordance with the word of God [Listen to this] which asks us to love everyone." This man says, "Because the Bible says we're to love everyone, we're to accept that kind of behavior." Friend, the Bible says it is wrong, it is evil. The most loving thing I can say is, "That behavior is sinful. It is wrong." People say,

“That’s not a very loving statement.” According to the word of God, it is. Mushy sentimentality says, “Hey, we’ll just take it.”

I’m happy to report, although the Executive Committee recommended that that be changed, just this past week the entire body of this denomination rejected it, and they maintain that policy that homosexuals are not to be ordained. People say, “How can you say that? That is such an unloving statement.” Would you look at verse 9 again? “Real love hates what is evil.” Friend, you cannot read this book without saying that kind of behavior and other kinds of behavior are evil. Is consenting agreement the only standard we use for what’s right? I hate to say it, but in some cases, that may be true in incest, that may be true in pedophilia. Where are you going to draw the line there? You draw the line where God’s word draws the line.

America is adrift without a moral standard, a moral anchor, and until we get back to the word of God, we’re going to get further and further away from God’s standard. True love says we hate what is evil, but we love what is good. That is love according to the Bible.

III. REAL LOVE GETS INVOLVED

There is a third characteristic of love, according to this scripture. Real love gets involved. It doesn’t just say, “I love you.” It is willing to get down where somebody needs help and to help them. It is the kind of love that doesn’t just come from the mouth; it comes from the heart. 1 Peter 1:22 says, “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, not from the mouth, but from the heart.” As we talk about love, one of the problems we have, because we’re all English-speaking people, is that we have only one word for love in the English language. When I say, “I love steaks” and “I love my wife, Cindy,” I have to use the same word. You realize it is not the same kind of word. In the language in which the Bible was written, there were four words for love.

1. Eros—romantic love

Eros means romantic or sensual love. We get our English word “erotic” from that word. A form of that word appears only one time in the New Testament. In Galatians 6:14, the Apostle Paul says, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world was crucified, and I, unto the world.” Paul was saying, “Now that I’ve come to Christ, my passionate love affair, my erotic attraction to the world, now has been crucified. It’s dead. My romantic fascination with the world is dead and gone because of Jesus.” That’s the only time that word appears in the New Testament.

The other three words for love appear in this one little passage of scripture we’re looking at today.

2. Philia—friendship

Philia means friendship. It is a camaraderie kind of love, or attraction. It is often called brotherly love. In fact, if you look in verse ten where it says, “be devoted to one another in brotherly love,”

that is the combination, "phileo," the Greek word "adelphus," for brother; Philadelphia which means City of Brotherly Love.

3. Storge—affection

It means affection towards something or someone. That word is a general word that could be used of the affection of a mother for her child. It was also used for the affection of a person for a pet, of a person for maybe a favorite piece of clothing. That's the word that we would use today when you say, "I love steak," I have an affection toward that, or "I love it when you do that," or something like that. That word "storge" appears only one time in the entire New Testament. Here it is right here, verse ten. You see the word devoted? Be devoted to one another. That's the word. It is "storge". It means that we are to have that kind of affection and attraction toward one another that we say, "I like you, I like being with you, I like everything about you."

4. Agape—unselfish love

You may be familiar with this. It takes the focus off you and puts the focus on the other person. With eros, philia and storge, the affection is on you. "I love you romantically because of what you do for me. I love you as a brother because of the way you help me. I love this food because of what it does to me when I eat it." Agape is totally unselfish. It turns outward and says, "I love you because of who you are and what I can do for you."

The Bible says we are to love one another. In fact, the entire remainder of chapter 12 is a commentary on how we are to love one another. We are going to study how to love each other in families, how to love in business, and even how to love your enemies. Now, if it were easy to love people, God wouldn't give us so much information about it. And if the only people we had to love were those who love us, it would be simple. But the Bible says we are to love everybody, all brothers and sisters in Christ. You and I both know that some of them are easy to love, and some of them are easier to love, right? You know what I mean? But, as you allow the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, to come out of you, you can even love those that you think are unlovable.

How can we love those we consider unlovable? Think of the way God did it. Someone has said that the way you love unloving people is you either take your skin, your flesh off of you and project it onto them, and then all that self-love that we usually direct toward ourselves, we direct toward them. Or you take their flesh and bones off of them and kind of put it on you, and we just think of our own wants and desires, and we try to love them like that. You say, "That sounds a little spooky to me, a little Far-Eastern-mystery-religion to me." That's exactly what the incarnation of Jesus Christ is all about.

The Bible says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." You know what Jesus did? Jesus, who was Spirit and Truth, came down and put our flesh on Him. He put on skin and bones and corpuscles, because he said, "I want to feel what you feel. I want to know what your desires are, what your wishes are, what your wants are. The only way I can do that is to become one of you." The most loving thing Jesus ever did was to take our humanity upon himself. That is how we love other people. We take their humanity upon ourselves and say, "If I

were them, what would I want? What would I desire?" Then we do that for them. Unselfish love gets involved; it doesn't just say, "I love you."

Have you ever heard of Eleanor Bradley? Chances are you haven't, but I don't want you to forget her. A few years ago, Eleanor Bradley was shopping in New York City on Fifth Avenue. It was early afternoon and there were thousands of people everywhere. Eleanor Bradley is an elderly lady and as she was stepping up on the curb, she lost her balance, fell and couldn't get up. It was discovered later that she broke her leg. There she is, halfway on the sidewalk, halfway off the curb. She began to ask someone to help her. "Please, won't somebody help me? Please, will you help me?" She cried out, not two minutes, not 10 minutes, not 20 minutes, not 30 minutes, but for 40 minutes she lay there. The people walked around her, walked over her, ignored her or just didn't pay any attention. After 40 minutes, a cab driver stopped and saw her. He opened the cab, put her inside and took her to the hospital.

You see, the thing that most exemplifies selfishness is that you don't care about anybody else. That is the essence of self-love. "I care about me; I don't care about you." That is the antithesis of love. You say, "Well, that is in New York City, pastor. That would never happen in Tyler, Texas. I guarantee you, out here in the South, we have courtesy, we have kindness." I think that probably every single Sunday that you come to this place, the same thing happens. Maybe not broken legs, but there are people in this room who have broken hearts and broken hopes and broken homes. You may not hear them cry out with their voices, "Help me," but if you look into their eyes, you would see people who are hurting and people that say, "I need you, I need your love, I need your acceptance, I need you to be there."

Sometimes we just walk around them and forget all about it. Our attitude is, if we see somebody with a flat tire, we drive by, roll down the window, say, "God bless you, I love you," and drive off. That is not love. Love gets involved. It is totally unselfish.

I heard a story about a guy who was lonely and felt unloved. He was walking down the street one day and looked in the bookstore window and saw a book entitled, *How to Hug*. Being sort of lonely, he went inside to buy the book, only to discover it was the 12th volume of an encyclopedia set. You'll get it about 3:00 this afternoon. He went in expecting to find a book on love, and what he got was an encyclopedia.

There are a lot of people out there coming to churches, and you know what they're looking for? They're looking for love, they're looking for acceptance, for hugs, and what they get is an encyclopedia of theology. If there is any place that love ought to be given out freely, it ought to be the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is where the arms of Christ (we are the arms of Christ) ought to reach out and embrace people. That is why the Bible says we ought to greet one another with a holy kiss. The Bible says the church ought to be a place of affection and acceptance and love. Let's get involved.

IV. REAL LOVE GIVES HONOR

Number four: real love gives honor. Would you look at the last part of verse 10? It says, "Honor one another above yourselves." Wouldn't this be a great city and great church if suddenly every

one of us were more concerned about putting other people in places of honor than trying to get honor for ourselves? In other words, trying to step over everybody else to advance ourselves, we're trying to honor and advance the other person. That's what it means to give honor. The reason I don't buy the statement, "Well, I just can't love him," or "I just can't love her," is because love is not a feeling.

I want you to notice two things about love.

1. Love is primarily an act of the will, not the emotions

You choose to do that. Think about the word honor. When you go into a court of law, if you are going to follow the correct judicial protocol, you say to the judge, "Yes, Your Honor" or "No, Your Honor." You may not feel any kind of affection toward the judge, in fact, you may feel just the opposite, but if you want to do what's right, you will give that judge honor. You see, you don't have to feel anything towards somebody to give them honor. That's why this is a good characteristic of love.

Wouldn't our marriages be better if we gave honor to one another? I heard about a guy that went to a meeting where a bunch of guys were talking about how the husband is the boss, and men just need to go back and demand that their wives submit to them.

He was telling one of his friends about it. He said, "I went back from that meeting and walked in the front door, slammed it shut and pointed my finger at my wife and said, 'Listen here. From this day on, I'm the boss. You're going to do what I say to do. You're going to submit whether you like it or not.' After I said that to her, I didn't see her for a whole week."

"You didn't see her for a whole week?"

"That's right. After I said 'I'm the boss, you're going to submit whether you like it or not,' I didn't see her for a whole week. But after a week, the swelling went down enough in one eye that I began to see her."

The Bible does say, "Wives submit." I believe that is the teaching of God, but sometimes we stress that so much, submit, submit, submit. You know what I believe, guys? I believe in my entire ministry, I have never met a Christian wife who did not submit when her husband gave her proper honor. Husbands, give her honor, because the Bible says in 1 Peter, you're to give your wife honor as the weaker vessel. That means she's not as strong physically as you are, so you ought to honor her.

What would happen to your marriage if you started honoring your mate? Dr. James Dobson, the Christian psychologist, says he believes 75 percent of marriage problems would disappear if husbands and wives would start showing kindness and courtesy to one another. That's what love is. You don't have to feel that; you choose to do that.

2. Love is primarily a choice, not a feeling

It is a choice that you make, not a feeling. You decide you're going to do that. "I'm going to love that brother, I'm going to love that sister. I may not like some of the things they do, but I'm

going to love them through the power of Jesus Christ." Folks, can I say to you that Jesus said there's only one sign that proves that you're a Christian. It is not a fish on the bumper of your car. It is not a tall steeple on your church. It is not a cross you wear around your neck. "There is one sign that you're a follower of mine," he said, "And it is love. If you have love for one another, then the world will know that you're my children."

Most of you know I love to play golf and love to watch golf. Last Sunday, I was watching the final round of the U.S. Open. Payne Stuart was battling against Phil Mickelson. Phil Mickelson was the real story, because his wife, Amy, was back in Arizona expecting his first child. He had already stated if his wife went into labor, the moment his caddy got a page, he was going to walk off the golf course, even if he was leading in the tournament. He would immediately get on a jet and go to be on with his wife. Phil's commitment to his family is a great statement.

I've been around some of these golfers at different tournaments and events. Payne Stuart has always been known as the most arrogant, egotistical, self-centered guys around—a typical PGA pro. He had a nickname among the other tour players. They never said it in front of him, but his nickname was Major Pain, because he was just that way. I'm watching this final round and I notice he's got a bracelet on, WWJD, what would Jesus do? Just because somebody wears a bracelet, it doesn't mean he or she is a Christian, any more than a rock star wearing a cross means they're a follower of Jesus either. There was an article in *Sports Illustrated* this week that said Payne Stewart was a self-centered guy a few years ago. He got so discouraged about his health and career and was at a low point in his life. One of his friends told him about Jesus. And two years ago, he gave his heart and life to Jesus Christ. He was born again. The people around him, his wife, his children and the other touring pros say there has been a drastic change in his life. Instead of being a totally self-centered person, suddenly he cares for people. He's a much kinder, more patient, loving person.

Last Sunday, when he tapped in that 18-foot putt to win the United States Open, instead of just jumping around and thinking of himself, he goes over to Phil Mickelson, grabs him by the shoulders and looks in his eyes, and says, "You have something better than winning the U.S. Open. You're going to be a father. You're going to be a father." I guarantee you, the old Payne Stuart, before Jesus Christ, would have never said or thought anything like that.

Did you know the greatest testimony of the life-changing power of Jesus Christ is that He can take anybody like a Payne Stuart and turn them into a person who is unselfish and loves other people? When people look at somebody like that, they say, "There's a difference in that person's life." Payne Stuart was quick to say, as he made his announcement at the end that it was all because of his faith in the Lord.

Have you ever heard this question? "If you were taken to court and convicted of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence in your life to prove the verdict?" You say, "What evidence is that?" Love that is sincere, that discriminates, that gets involved; love that honors other people.

You know, this is a great church. But I just pray that we would have a revival of love in this church. I want this to be a church that is not frozen together by formalism or wired together by

organization or tied together by tradition. May it be a church that is melted together by the hot love of Jesus Christ.

Father, we know there's only one proof that you gave us of your changed life, and that's how we love others. I pray that there will be somebody in this room today who will decide they're going to start loving the way you love, and may it change them from the inside out. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

OUTLINE

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II. DISCRIMINATES

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God's love:

1. Rejects evil
2. Clings to good

III. GETS INVOLVED

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. *1 Peter 1:22*

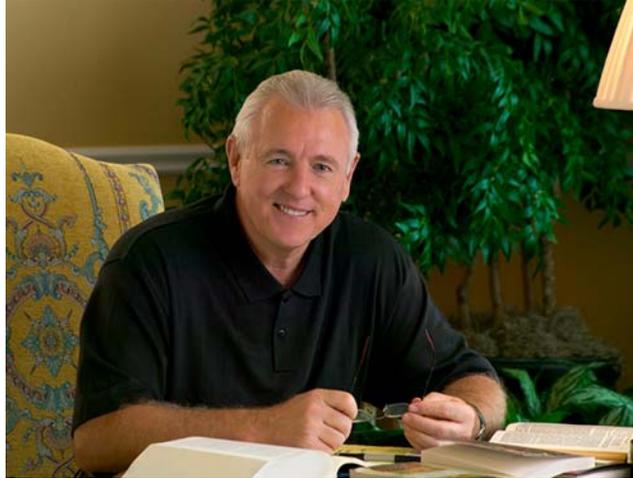
Four loves:

1. eros—romantic
2. philia—friendship
3. storge—affection
4. agape—unselfish love

IV. GIVES HONOR

Love is primarily:

1. An act of the will not the emotions
2. A choice not a feeling



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes