

# The True Story of St. Valentine

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*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*  
John 15:13

Monologue can be used for Valentine's Day (February 14)  
(To be narrated by an older student or the teacher)

## Background Information

Making Valentines for loved ones, celebrating with flowers, gifts or a romantic dinner, making sure that your family knows that you really care for them—these are all wonderful February 14<sup>th</sup> traditions, but why? Would you like to know the true origins of this holiday of love?

The following inspiring love story is written in the form of a dramatic monologue. It is ready to use for any setting: in the home, at church, or in a classroom. Consider how you can be used to tell the gospel through the life of this godly man.

## Props

- An assortment of modern and old Valentines
- “Minister of Love” necklace nametag
- Bold typed signs: **Agape**, **Phileo**, **Eros**
- Four love notes from Valentine’s congregation: “We love you.”, “Stand fast in the faith.”, “Love your jailers.”, and “We are praying for God’s deliverance for you.”
- A note from Valentine: “I love you all, brethren.” or a similar one
- A charcoal marker (from art store)
- Bench or small table to hold all props

## Characters and Costumes

- **Valentine** in traditional Roman citizen costume: a dark tunic down to the knees, with a plain off-white toga draped over the tunic, and leather sandals

## Blocking

The small table is placed center stage, containing the “Minister of Love” necklace nametag, the three Greek Love signs, the four “notes”, and charcoal marker. The stage walls may be decorated with various modern or historical Valentines such as Victorian Valentines, or they may be suspended from the ceiling.

## Monologue: The True Story of St. Valentine

*(The “mystery” Valentine walks slowly onto center stage and begins to address the audience)*

My last name is well known, but history has not recorded my first name. I lived in Rome in the third century, and God called and chose me to be a minister of His Word. My passion was the topic of *love*. I preached and taught on love so much that my congregation began calling me the Minister of Love! *(Place the “Minister of Love” nametag necklace around your neck)* *[Aside:]* I really liked that name!

I taught that there are three words for *love* in the Bible: *Agape*, *Phileo*, and *Eros*.

*(Hold up Agape sign)* *Agape* love is expressed God’s way. *Agape* love wants to give and make sure that other people are happy and fulfilled. It would never want to do anything to hurt the other person. *Agape* love is giving, expecting nothing in return. Since man is naturally selfish, we can never demonstrate *agape* love unless God gives it to us to give to others.

*(Hold up Phileo sign)* *Phileo* is another Greek word for *love*. We get the name *Philadelphia* from it (the city of brotherly love). *Phileo* love is the love of a friend, and it is the love between family members and siblings.

*(Hold up Eros sign)* *Eros* is physical love, like the love expressed between a husband and wife in marriage. This kind of love should never be expressed outside of the marriage covenant.

Because I taught so much on love, many couples would come to me who believed they should be joined together for life. I counseled and prepared them for marriage God’s way. I told them they should not indulge in *eros* love until they were married. I performed many weddings because there were many who wanted to be married God’s way!

Who am I? *(Pause for responses)* Valentine!

In the year 268 a new emperor came to power, Claudius II. Thankfully he declared that he would not persecute and kill Christians as other emperors before him. Nevertheless, there were problems with his governance.

Emperor Claudius became upset that there were not enough men to fight in his army. He became convinced that the reason for this is that married men were more loyal to their wives and children than they were to Rome. He determined to find a way to solve this problem. Claudius thought, “If I forbid marriage, then men will be more loyal to me than to others.” Was this good reasoning? *(Request audience response)*

So Emperor Claudius made an edict, which became law, that no minister could perform marriage ceremonies. Can you imagine—no more marriages? But Claudius did not care if a man and a woman lived together, without the proper blessing of marriage.

When other Christian ministers and I heard of this edict, we were shocked. I now had a decision to make; would I obey the emperor, or what the Bible clearly taught? I made my decision, with the conviction that I must obey God rather than man. I continued to perform holy marriage ceremonies.

When Claudius learned that I was disobeying his edict, he was astonished and very angry. He felt that he had to stop me, so he had me arrested and thrown into prison. During my trial I refused to bow to the Roman gods and the will of Emperor Claudius. I paid a great price to stand by my holy convictions: I was sentenced to a terrible execution by beheading.

The people in my church were horrified. We loved each other very much. They decided to try to communicate with me in prison. They wrote little notes that were snuck into prison and given to me. These notes said things like:

(*Hold up each note from your congregation one at a time*) “We love you”; “Stand fast in the faith”; “Love your jailers”; “We are praying for God’s deliverance for you.”

I wrote back to them, (*Hold up the note from yourself*) always signing the letter, (*Write on the note as you say it*) “From your Valentine.”

God received me into heaven when I was executed on February 14<sup>th</sup>, in the year of our Lord 270.

Emperor Claudius was wrong when he thought that his law would be the end of ministers doing things God’s way. Many other pastors resisted Claudius’s ungodly law that outlawed marriage and signed the end of their letters, “In the memory of Valentine” or “From your Valentine.”

Now let us fast-forward over two hundred years to about A.D. 500. At this time people were not handling the serious subjects of courting, love and marriage in a godly manner. The Romans observed a holiday or festival called Lupercalia. It was named after the the god of love, the Roman god Lupercus, and the Greek god known as Pan. This festival, celebrated on February 15<sup>th</sup>, was filled with sensuality and immorality. One popular event was a sort of “love lottery.” All the names of the single women in a town were put into a box. All of the single men in the town picked out a name and that woman became his girlfriend for the next year. Another pagan practice of the day was that boys would kill a goat, cut off strips of its flesh, dip them in blood and go seek a girl that they liked. When they found her, they would slap her with the bloody goat flesh to place a spell on her so she would like them. Another tradition was that the first boy an eligible girl met on February 15<sup>th</sup> was supposed to become her husband.

The pastors were very upset about these and other pagan practices. Is this how God wanted His people to act toward one another? The reigning Roman Catholic pope, Galatius, got involved. He began to research in history for something that had happened around the 15<sup>th</sup> of February that could be used to substitute for this debauched festival. He discovered that I, Valentine, was martyred on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Pope Galatius declared me a saint and declared February 14<sup>th</sup> St. Valentine’s Day.

The church revised the pagan “love lottery” practice and began to substitute the names of saints for the names of girls. Whichever saint you drew out of the box, you must pray to for the next year, and you were to try to emulate his particular good character traits.

Today, we all love candy and valentines on St. Valentine’s Day. Only during Christmas are more greeting cards sold than on Valentine’s Day. This holiday is still filled with non-Christian practices, however. For example, the Roman god Cupid (Greek god Eros), the god of physical love, has become a symbol of love. In ancient literature, Cupid is frequently invoked as fickle, playful and perverse. He is often illustrated carrying two sets of arrows—one set gold-headed, which inspires love—and the other lead-headed, which inspires hatred. Today, Cupid is depicted shooting an arrow through the heart of one to be captured for love.

O brothers and sisters, don’t allow your hearts to be captured by someone else! Only give your heart away to the one whom God has chosen for you to marry, “till death do you part!” as I, Valentine, would have said! This Valentine’s Day, let’s celebrate God’s way, rejoicing in His agape love for us and loving each other the way He intended.

## Sources

Paul Jehle, *Stories of America’s Christian History- Holidays*, Volume II, #8 Valentine’s Day

Robert J. Myers, *Celebrations—The Complete Book of American Holidays* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1972)