

Is Valentine's Day A Pagan Holiday?

Hallmark cards are being wiped off the shelves, flowers propped up in pretty vases and a barrage of candy hauled out of local stores. Single or married, just about everyone partakes in Valentine's Day to some degree.

As a Christian you may be wondering the historical roots of the holiday and whether some of the pagan folklore surrounding the day is true.

So, what is the history?

The first festival that some tie Valentine's Day to is "Lupercalia," which was an ancient Roman festival of fertility. Records show that during Feb. 13th-15th some men would kill a goat and a dog, and take the skins of the animals.

Yale Professor Noel Lenski told NPR the women would line up for the men to hit them with the blood soaked skins believing it would help make them fertile.

Pastor Vlad Savchuk posted a video saying, "There is no record of this holiday being a matchmaking that Valentine's has become today or that is promoted romance or love."

You've probably also heard of Saint Valentine. Valentine was reported to be a temple priest who died in A.D. 270. Some accounts say that he was imprisoned by Emperor Claudius for helping Christians in Rome wed.

While imprisoned some believe he fell in love with the jail keepers daughter. He would send notes to her signed, "Love, Your Valentine."

It is unclear for certain whether Pope Gelasius I made Feb. 14th into a holiday to celebrate the Christian martyr. "We just don't see for a thousand something years Christians or other cultures really celebrating love and romance in honor of Saint Valentine," Savchuk says.

Valentine's Day gained more popularity after Chaucer and Shakespeare started writing about the romantic day in their work, which spread across Europe into the New World. A man by the name of Geoffrey also wrote a poem called "The Parliament of Fowls."

"It probably had more influence on what we know the Valentine's Day to be today than anything else. It was written in the 14th century. It described a group of bird which would gather together in the early spring to Saint Valentine's day," Savchuk says.

People around the world would send love letters during bird mating season which also fell in February.

In 2020 Forbes reported that Valentine's Day is a now \$20 billion holiday, "a day where 145 million cards trade hands." The giving of cards on the holiday in America originated from Esther Howland. She designed unique, pricey cards that later turned into New England Valentine Co.

With that being said...

"Historically speaking it's not really connected to a pagan holiday and historically speaking it's not really connected to a guy who was martyred," Savchuk says.

He encourages all Christians out there to look at their motive. If you are married and want to go out of your way to celebrate your spouse with a thoughtful card and romantic evening—that's great! If you are a Christian single going out to party and get together with different people then that would be wrong.

Whether you are married or single we can all embody the kind of love talked about in the Bible. First Corinthians 13 tells us that love is long suffering, love is kind, love does not envy, love isn't puffed up, love does not behave improperly, love does not seek its own, love is not easily provoked, love rejoices in truth, love bears all, believes all, hopes all, endures all thing and love never fails.

This Valentine's Day you can prayerfully examine your heart in each of those areas to see how you can better love those around you.



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