

NOTES

~ *True Love* ~

- We often wonder what true love is. What we'll learn today is that true love isn't a feeling, but action. True love – the kind of love our God and Christ have for the world – is one that says, “I'll treat you right despite how I “feel”. This is also how Jesus' followers must treat Him and each other.
- Today, we'll explore true love by initially looking at the first two of three parts of Paul's message to the Church at Corinth (**1Corinthians 13**):
 - **Verses 1-3**: The wrong intent or focus - being self-seeking destroys:
 - The gifts of tongues and prophecy
 - The gift of giving (possessions to include the body)
 - **Verses 4-7**: True love described . . .
 - Is patient, kind, not jealous, and not arrogant
 - Doesn't brag
 - Isn't self-seeking
 - Rejoices in the truth
 - Forgets sin
- Love is defined in three ways in the Bible: emotion-based lust and fondness, and action-based *agapao/agape* love
- *True* love **isn't** a *feeling* such as lust or fondness. These are human emotions born of electricity, chemistry, and conditioning.
 - **Lust** in the Bible
 - Greek word *epithumeo* (long for, covet) (**Matthew 5:27-28**)
 - Greek word *epithumia* (**Ephesians 2:1-3**)
 - **Fondness** examples from the Bible (there are several others!)
 - Philadelphia - brotherly love (**Hebrews 13:1**)
 - Philarguria - love of money (greed) (**Hebrews 13:5**)
- True love is *action*; this type of love proves we're in a covenant with our God through Jesus and is what we'll be judged by at the end of time. This is represented in the Bible by the Greek verb *agapao* for benevolent things we *do* (**Matthew 22:35-40; John 3:16, 13:34 & 14:15**) and by the Greek noun *agape* that represents the moral compelling that leads to *agapao* action (**Matthew 24:10-13; John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 13**).
- **Summary**: Obey our Christ's commandments and put faith into action by showing true, actionable love. Care for others & disciple them (**Matthew 25:31-34 & 28:18-20**). Consider others first (**Philippians 2:3-4**). And, remember that true love isn't self-seeking or prideful.

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Intro

“Greg – thanks for the \$50! I love you, man!”
“I really love my wife.”
“God loves you.”
“I’m a 16-year-old with a hot girlfriend! I really love her . . .”
“I love my fellow man.”
“I really love my car and my job.”
“My kids are my life – I love them a lot!”

One word, so many applications!

One word and yet so many applications! What is true love? How does God love us? How should we love our husbands, wives, or fellow man? Answering these questions can help us in our personal or professional lives, marital relationships, and manifestation of faith.

True love isn’t a feeling – it’s action!

First, true love isn’t a feeling. We usually associate a mushy, warm down-in-your-gut feeling with love and even with the presence of God’s Spirit. And yet both of these – true love we should exhibit and the love of God and His Spirit – are related to faith and action, not emotion.

Three types of love

What we understand is that there are three basic types of ‘love’ mentioned in Scripture: (1) Lust or desire, (2) fondness for a person or thing, and charitable action.

Emotion-based lust & fondness

Only two of them are related to emotion – lust and fondness. The Holy Scriptures reflect all of these, primarily in the Greek root words of epithumeo or epithumia for lust, variations of phil (as in philanthropea or Philadelphia) for fondness, and agape (noun) /agapao (verb) for charitable action.

Action-based agape/agapao

1Corinthians 13

Paul wrote quite a dissertation on love in his first letter to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 13). The message is divided into three parts (we’ll only focus on the first two parts today):

- Verses 1-3, which introduces wrong intent;
- Verses 4-7, which describes true love
- Verses 8-13, which puts true love into perspective when compared with spiritual gifts, hope, and faith.

Part One: action done for the wrong motives is ineffective

In the first part, Paul says something that may be shocking to some: Even if we have spiritual gifts such as tongues or prophecy, they're ineffective if we do them to our own benefit and not that of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. He goes on to say that even charitable action or martyrdom – the giving away of all our possessions or being killed for our beliefs – mean nothing if done for the wrong reason. What is the right reason? We'll explore that later . . .

[1 Corinthians 13:1-3]

Part Two: action not centered on self

Paul then tells us in part II what true love is, does, or doesn't do. He's very clear that true love is not centered on self. And in the spirit of 'turning the other cheek' to allow for mercy and reconciliation, we learn that love is patient, interested in righteousness, and forgiving.

[1 Corinthians 13:4-7]

The 'part two' love is agape love

So, what type of love is Paul referring to? It's the charitable action type not based on emotion. But, let's look at each type one at a time starting with lust.

Two examples of lust

Love that equates to lust or a desire for something, and that often ends in sexual sin, is represented by these words:

- Epithumeo, which means to long for or covet even sexually as proclaimed by Jesus.

[Matthew 5:27-28]

- Epithumia, which Paul says is the desire of the flesh. If we practice sinful behavior in response to this 'feeling', we'll suffer judgment.

[Ephesians 2:1-3]

Intro to fondness (phil . . .)

On the other hand, when we say we love something or someone we're most likely just expressing our fondness for that object or individual. The root of this type of love is *phil* and variations are as follows:

Phileo – fondness of a thing or position; example=Pharisee

Philadelphia – brotherly fondness

Philaguria – fondness for money

What is true love? It's benevolence – 'doing'

Two main commandments by Jesus

10 commandments summed up by Jesus' two commandments

- **Phileo** to represent an individual or thing or position. For instance, Jesus tells us of the futility of fasting in such a way as to display your discomfort to others. Their sympathy will be all that this action will reap. He also describes the same basic love for attention when telling the story of the Pharisees who like others to see them pray.
- **Philadelphia** to describe brotherly love as referenced by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews. This may refer to affection we have for other followers of Christ. But, that affection should also lead to action as we ensure their needs are met.

[Hebrews 13:1]

- **Philarguria** is the love of money – greed. This is certainly a trap for many and one that's hard to separate yourself from if you fall prey to it. The rich man Jesus spoke of (the one that sadly refused to sell all he had to follow Him) probably suffered from this type of love. The best thing to do is to be content with what you have to avoid this trap.

[Hebrews 13:5]

But, what is *true* love? It's action; this type of love proves we're in a covenant with our God through Jesus and is what we'll be judged by at the end of time. It's represented in the Bible by the Greek verb *agapao* for benevolent things we *do*. For instance, we're compelled to love God with everything we are and have. We're also to love others as ourselves. These are the two main commandments Jesus gave, saying that all the others are wrapped up in them.

[Matthew 22:35-40]

In fact, the 10 commandments can indeed be identified by two categories: Those related to loving God, and those pertaining to loving – or behaving a certain way – toward our fellow man.

“God so loved the world . . .” action despite feelings

Jesus’ commandment to love one another

We prove we’re disciples by our actionable love

Agapao actionable love is done out of obligation

World without obligatory love?

Intro to *agape* love – moral compelling that drives the action

We’ve heard that “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . .*” Do you know that this is *agapao* action He did for mankind despite our walking away from Him 6,000 years ago or how He has felt about humanity’s actions at times?

[John 3:16]

And, one of Jesus’ two main commandments that sum up all the others from the Law and prophets also iterated that actionable *agapao* action:

[John 13:34]

If we observe the same obligation toward God that He did for us, then we’ll obey His commandments as the Messiah stated and reflected by John.

[John 14:15]

So, we are to actionably love one another as God and our Christ have loved us. Because this *agapao* love is done out of obedience and done despite how we feel, we can say that it’s obligatory.

Can you imagine what life would be like without the love that manifests itself in obligation? Unstable and sporadic lust or occasional fondness would come and go like the wind leaving nothing to ensure consistent, Godly treatment of us, our family, or brothers and sisters in Christ. Without a sense of obligation, God would surely have just wiped out mankind for good without a second thought.

Without this, there’d be no hope for married couples or friends. Anger would sever relationships for good. Reconciliation or redemption would be impossible.

Related to the *agapao* action is *agape* love, which is the moral compelling that drives the action. So, the two – *agapao* and *agape* – are inseparable.

Actionable love will decrease in the last days

Jesus told us that the moral compelling to act – *agape* love – will decrease (or go cold) in the last days due to wickedness.

[Matthew 24:10-13]

Moral compelling leading to action proves we're Jesus' disciples

He also told us that *agape* love that leads to action proves we're His disciples.

[John 13:35]

Faith without works is dead

While our works don't save us, the absence of action – or faith without works – neutralizes our faith and salvation. We need only to look at Jesus' dissertation on the Mount of Olives to confirm this fact. There, Jesus gave a parable of the judgment – or wrath – to come, comparing the outcome of those who indeed practice *agape* love to those who don't.

[Matthew 25:31-34]

We're to tell others about the great news of salvation and teach

He also commanded us to care for others as we just learned from the Mount of Olives Scripture. We're also told to preach the Gospel, baptizing believers into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to disciple them.

[Matthew 28:18-20]

Consider others better than ourselves

We need to love others by taking care of their needs and entering into discipleship. Nothing else will do, and there's no other way. And this will be impossible unless we take our eyes off ourselves. Paul takes it a step further and insists we consider the needs of others before our own.

[Philippians 2:3-4]

Summary

In summary, there are two Biblical loves based on emotional “feeling”: Lust or desire, and fondness. Lust is more short-lived than fondness, but both can fade depending on how we “feel”.

There’s one more, critical, love: *agape* and *agapao*. *Agape* is a compelling that should lead to action. *Agapao* is indeed action that needs to take place regardless of how we feel. God has loved us despite how He ‘felt’ by offering salvation through Jesus. We must in turn love Him by honoring our obligation to obey His commandments, preach the good news, disciple, and take care of others. Anyone who has confirmed the covenant with Christ by partaking of the communion cup of wine has agreed to do this!

Challenge

My challenge for you is no different than the Messiah’s challenge for all of us: Take care of the poor and body of Christ in *agape/agapao* love, and make disciples.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. —1Corinthians 13:1-3.

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. —1Corinthians 13:4-7.

You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. — Matthew 5:27-28.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. — Ephesians 2:1-3.

Let love of the brethren continue. — Hebrews 13:1.

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,” — Hebrews 13:5.

One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” —Matthew 22:35-40.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. —John 3:16.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”—John 13:34.

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” —John 14:15.

“At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.” Matthew 24:10-13.

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” —John 13:35.

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. —Matthew 25:31-34.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” —Matthew 28:18-20.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. —Philippians 2:3-4.