

What Does it Mean to Love God

When I was a kid, one of the things that I really enjoyed playing with, was a magnet. There was always metal shavings and stuff in the garage that I could run it through and make it look like it was growing hair. The idea that that hunk of metal could attract other metals to it fascinated me. The thing about it was that the other metals, if magnetic, could not resist the attraction of the magnet. If the magnet was strong enough, it would pull the other metals toward it. Having worked in the steel industry for such a long time it was part of the training to learn how metal was made. It starts with scrap. Old cars, refrigerators, anything made of metal gets taken to the scrap yard where it is cleaned, broken into pieces, and then squashed together to make a large, heavy ball of metal. Those balls are moved around by giant electro-magnets that can lift thousands of pounds.

John 15:10

1

10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

Ok, so now you get to ask the question, what in the world is the connection between magnets and what John is talking about here in this passage?

I would submit to you that the attraction of a strong magnet is what should be seen in the Love that John is talking about.

2

Love should be a magnet

The Greek words translated "love" in **John 15:9** are...

3

Agape and Agapao

These two words present, if you will...

4

"The Characteristic or Defining Word, of Christianity"

Now, since God, through the Spirit, has used the idea of love to reveal and express ideas, even some previously unknown to man, but all necessary for man, it just makes sense for the one who seeks to be a follower of God to know as much about it as they can.

5 Our discussions in class of the thoughts in **1 Cor. 13** prompted me to do some study on this. It's probably one of the most discussed, misused, and misunderstood concepts in the scriptures.

The idea of love is what is preached by just about every religious group out there. God's Love is what people want to hear about. Love makes people feel good.

In the New Testament agape and agapao, actually the same word, one is a noun, the other a verb, are used...

6

A) To describe the attitude of God toward His Son

John 17:25-26

25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; **26** and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

7

B) The attitude of God towards the human race

John 3:16

16 "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.

8 C) God's attitude to those who believe in Jesus Christ

John 14:21

21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

9 D) To convey God's will to believers about how they are to treat each other

John 13:34

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

10 E) To show His Love to all men

1 Thess 3:11-13

11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; **12** and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; **13** so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

11 F) To express the essential nature of God

1 John 4:8

8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Here is the real thought that we need to understand...

12 ***"Love is always known by the actions it prompts"***

For example, look at what God's love has done for man in Christ...

1 John 4:9-10

13

9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Do you see? God's love is not a love of complacency, or lip-service. It is a love that works, that achieves, that is seen, and it is a love that is not bound by conditions or caveats...

Rom 5:8

14

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God exercised His love for man by Jesus to die for all men. Love is known by what it does. What I want to do in this lesson is to follow the thought I broached last Wednesday evening...

Luke 12:41-43

15

41 Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?" **42** And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? **43** "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

Just exactly what does it mean to love God and His Word? Christ tells Peter that the true manifestation of our love for God is revealed in our obedience to His Word. There must be a response to God's Word, and as I stated last week there always is. Either positive or negative, there is a response by everyone. The faithful servant is the one whom the Lord finds...

"Doing"

16

So with this thought in our minds, let's take a look at how the idea of love is used in the scriptures. Earlier we talked about one of the words that are translated as love in the New Testament...

17

1) Agapao or Agape

There is another Greek word that is translated as love in the scriptures...

2) Phileo

As we saw just a moment ago, Agape and Agapao are used to describe various concepts and characteristics...

18

A) To describe the attitude of God toward His Son

B) The attitude of God towards the human race

C) God's attitude to those who believe in Jesus Christ

D) To convey God's will to believers about how they treat each other

E) To show His Love to all men

F) To express the essential nature of God

The other word translated as love is Phileo which Vines defines as...

Phileo (NT:5368)

19

This is to be distinguished from agapao in this, that phileo more nearly represents "tender affection." The two words are used for the "love" of the Father for the Son, John 3:35 (No. 1), and 5:20 (No. 2); for the believer, 14:21 (No. 1) and 16:27 (No. 2); both, of Christ's "love" for a certain disciple, 13:23 (No. 1), and 20:2 (No. 2). Yet the distinction between the two verbs remains, and they are never used indiscriminately in the same passage; if each is used with reference to the same objects, as just mentioned, each word retains its distinctive and essential character.

Phileo is never used in a command to men to "love" God; it is, however, used as a warning in 1 Cor 16:22; agapao is used instead, e. g., Matt 22:37; Luke 10:27; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 8:3; 1 Peter 1:8; 1 John 4:21. The distinction between the two verbs finds a conspicuous instance in the narrative of John 21:15-17. The context itself indicates that agapao in the first two questions suggests the "love" that values and esteems (cf. Rev 12:11). It is an unselfish "love," ready to serve. The use of phileo in Peter's answers and the Lord's third question, conveys the thought of cherishing the Object above all else, of manifesting an affection characterized by constancy, from the motive of the highest veneration. See also Trench, Syn., Sec. xii.

Again, to "love" (phileo) life, from an undue desire to preserve it, forgetful of the real object of living, meets with the Lord's reproof, John 12:25. On the contrary, to "love" life (agapao) as used in 1 Peter 3:10, is to consult the true interests of living. Here the word phileo would be quite inappropriate.

So, basically, in summation...

20

Agápē is, "An unselfish love which seeks to meet a need in another." Phileo, while obviously very closely aligned with agape or agapao, refers more to friendship, though it is also defined as love. I think all too often we delineate between agape love and phileo love, when maybe what we should be looking more closely at is how either of these loves are put into action. Look at how the idea of love is used...

Christ wants us to love (agapao) our enemies...

Matt 5:44-45

21

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

22

Love Your Enemies

There have been whole week-long meetings held on this subject. Just exactly how can you love someone who wants nothing more than to see you gone? How do you love the person who stabs you in the back every opportunity they get, and even goes so far as to create those opportunities? Remember, that biblical love, either agape or phileo, is never passive, but always active. It is not scriptural to sit by the sideline and not get involved. The love God wants from His children returns kindness for hate, blessings for curses, exhortation for tearing-down, and yes, even discipline in the face of wrong-doing...

Prov 13:24

23

24 He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

God does not want us to stay away from those that persecute and despise, even as He did not stay aloof from those who hated Him. God wants us to love them, even as He loved us. Therein is the key. God's love for us is never passive. He acts upon it and always has. This brings us back to the thoughts of...

Luke 12:42

24

42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?"

According to what the Lord says here, He tells us someone can qualify as faithful and sensible? He is the one who feeds others, gives them their rations. In this context, Christ is talking about telling others the Gospel, feeding them the Bread of Life. That is the very epitome of love, giving someone else, even your enemies, the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ.

Remember the connection we talked about? Love, scriptural love, God's love for man being reflected through our love for each other, is the greatest draw, the greatest magnet, that there is. But just like with a real magnet, it only attracts things that have elements in them that are magnetic. God's Love, manifested in Christ and revealed through the word indeed attracts, but it can only attract the heart that has elements of honesty and goodness in it.

Luke 8:15

25

15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

God's Love, the Gospel, will not, cannot, unfortunately, attract every heart of every man. Just like a magnet can only attract things that are magnetic, the Gospel will only attract a good and honest heart. That is exactly what Christ Himself says in...

Matt 7:13-14

26

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. **14** "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Now, some might hear this and say that apparently there aren't many people with a good and honest heart. I don't think that's the point at all. I think the idea is that there aren't going to be many people that are willing to choose to have a good and honest heart. It is always a choice that each

individual must make for themselves. There will always be those who pretend to come to God, whether intentionally or otherwise, but only those who come to God in loving faith find Him...

Matt 7:21

27

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

The whole dynamic of loving faith is founded in love working within our hearts and lives. Love for God and His commandments...

John 14:15

28

15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Combined with a love for man...

1 John 4:7-14

READ

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. **8** The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. **9** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. **13** By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. **14** We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

No one argues that man can be saved unless he loves God. But this idea of loving each other will be the cause for many to be lost. Brethren, it is just as important that we love each other as it is that we love God, and that is precisely what John says...

1 John 4:15-21

READ

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. **16** We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. **17** By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. **18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. **19** We love, because He first loved us. **20** If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. **21** And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Luke tells us to be watching and waiting for the coming of the master. He also tells us that that watching and waiting is active, that we are to be doing what the master has told us to do because of our love for the master. Love is never passive, but always active and is to be seen in our response to God and each other. Remember...

29

Faithful Obedience Is the Correct and Scriptural Response to God's Love

So the final question is...

Just exactly WHAT are we doing while we are watching and waiting in LOVE.