

LOVE

Purpose: Designed to bridge the word "love" to understand it as arguably the most overworked and undervalued word in the English language.

Introduction

In our day-to-day world, we use the word "love" to describe everything from our feelings for a spouse to our preference for food.

This "catch-all" word has watered down one of the most powerful forces in human existence. We have been conditioned to believe that love is a chemical reaction "spark" or a feeling that happens to us. When the feeling is strong, we are loving; when the feeling fades, we assume the love has died. This creates a fragile foundation for our relationships and our faith, leaving us adrift whenever our emotions shift.

Biblical love, however, operates on an entirely different frequency. It is not a passive emotion, but an active, intentional choice. The Scriptures present love as a commitment of the will that often moves in the opposite direction from our feelings. To understand the "Anatomy of Love," we must deconstruct our cultural assumptions and look at the foundations used in the New Testament.

This study is designed to challenge the "verdict" of our lives. If we were to remove our words and our warm sentiments, what would the cold, hard evidence of our actions say about us?

Section 1: The "Feeling" vs The "Fact"

Core Scripture: 1 John 3:18 "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

The Concept:

In layman's terms, love is a muscle, not a mood. If you only exercise when you "feel" like it, your body will not change. Similarly, if you only love when you feel "in love," your character will not grow.

Everyday Application:

Think of a parent waking up at 3:00 AM to care for a sick child. They do not "feel" joyful or romantic in that moment; they feel exhausted and frustrated. Yet that is the highest form of love because it is a choice made despite feelings.

Food for Thought:

Where in your life are you waiting for a "feeling" before you do the right thing for someone else?

You can be the most talented person in the room, the most religious person in the church, or the most generous person in the neighborhood, but if you are doing it with a "what's in it for me" attitude, it's just noise.

Section 2: Understanding the Three Loves (Eros, Philia, and Agape)

The Three Faces of Love (The Greek Framework)

Before we delve into the text, we must understand that the Greeks had different words for several types of love. Modern English puts them all together, which is where we get confused.

- Eros: Eros is the heat; This is romantic or passionate love. It is the "spark." It is beautiful, but it is also based on how the other person makes us feel.
- Philia: Philia is the heart; This is brotherly love or friendship. It is based on shared interests and mutual respect. "I like you because we are alike."

- Agape: Agape is the hands; This is the love Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13. It is unconditional, sacrificial love. It is a decision to seek the highest good of another person, regardless of their response.

Core Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13 "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

Romans 12:10 — "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

Section 3: The Supremacy of Agape

Agape:

This is the love Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13. It is unconditional, sacrificial love. It is a decision to seek the highest good of another person, regardless of their response. Agape does not wait for the other person to deserve

Core Scripture: John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

The Concept:

Agape is the "Godkind" of love. It is unconditional. It does not love because the other person is "lovable"; it loves because the giver has decided to be a "lover."

Everyday Application:

Agape is choosing to be kind to a coworker who tried to take credit for your work. It is the decision to stay committed to a spouse during a season of depression.

Food for Thought:

Agape is the only love that is a command. You cannot command a feeling (Eros), but you can command a choice (Agape).

Section 4: The Patient Architect (1 Cor 13:4)

Core Scripture: Proverbs 14:29 "Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly."

The Concept:

Paul starts his list with "Love is patient." In the original language, this specifically means being "long-tempered" with people, not just circumstances.

Everyday Application:

Patience is giving someone the room to be imperfect without jumping down their throat. It is the "buffer" between someone's mistake and your reaction.

Reflective Question:

Who is the hardest person for you to be patient with right now? That is your primary "Agape" assignment.

Section 5: Love's Protection Policy

Core Scripture: 1 Peter 4:8 "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

The Concept:

1 Corinthians 13 says love "keeps no record of wrongs." In our digital age, we love to "keep receipts"; reminders of how people hurt us so we can use them later. Love deletes the file.

Everyday Application:

In a marriage or friendship, "keeping no records" means that when you get into an argument today, you do not mention something they did in 2022.

Food for Thought:

Are you a "record keeper"? What would happen if you burned the ledger?

Section 6: The Durability of Love

Core Scripture: Lamentations 3:22-23 "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail."

The Concept:

"Love never fails." This does not mean the relationship will always work out (because the other person has free will), but it means that your act of loving is never a waste of time.

Everyday Application:

We often think, "I showed them love, and they didn't change, so I failed." No. If you acted in Agape, you succeeded in your calling. The result is up to God; the obedience is up to you.

Section 7: The Final Verdict

Core Scripture: Matthew 7:20 — "Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."

The Concept:

This brings us to our teaching point: The Evidence. If your life were a court case and the charge was "Loving like Christ," would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Layman's Terms:

Do not tell me you love your neighbor; show me your calendar and your bank statement. Show me how you treat people who can do nothing for you.

Closing Application:

Pick one "Agape" action to perform this week for someone who does not "deserve" it. Do not wait for the feeling. Just make a choice