

Back to the Father

Your Journey

Journey of Studies

Study on Love

Introduction - Part 1



There are eight words for love in the Greek language but there are only two that are frequently used in the New Testament (agape and phileo).

Love is used over 300 times in the New Testament and has been spoken of and defined in a variety of ways.

McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia states that our love for God is manifested by a high appreciation, and an earnest desire for communion with him. It includes joy in all that serves God, absolute submission to him, and a desire to do everything for his glory. Consequently, anything that is in opposition to this is an enemy to our love.

The love of those who feel themselves bound together by that common bond is essentially of the same character. Our love for others should be an expression of God's love for us.

Yet in the divine love itself there is a distinction made, inasmuch as God's love towards those who love him and keep his commandments is a strengthening, sustaining pleasure in them (John 14:21,23). While his love towards the others is benevolence and pity, which, according to their conduct, the disposition of their hearts, and their receptivity, is either not felt at all

by them, or only produces pain, fear, or, again, hope, desire, etc., but not a feeling of complete, abiding joy.

So, in the love of the children of God towards the human race we find the distinction between brotherly and universal love. In both we find the characteristics of kindness and benevolence, sympathy, willingness to help, gentleness, and patience.

Love also derives a special determination from the personality, the spiritual and essential organization of the one who loves, and also his particular position. It manifests itself in friendship as a powerful attraction, a hearty sympathy of feelings, a strong desire for being together and enjoying a communion of thoughts and feelings.

In sexual love it is a tender reciprocal attraction, a satisfaction in each other as the mutual complement of life, and a desire for absolute and lasting community of existence.

Parental, filial, and brotherly love can be considered as a branch of this affection. Both friendship and love have the full sanction of Christian morals when based on the love of God. As wedded love is an image of the relation between the Lord and his people, or the Church. Paternal, filial, and brotherly love are respectively images of the love of God towards his children, of their love towards him, and of their love towards each other.

All these relations may want this higher consecration, and yet be well regulated; they have then a moral character.

But they may also be disorderly: friendship can be sensual, selfish, and even degenerate into unnatural sexual connection; sexual love may become selfish, having no other object but the gratification of lust. Parental love may change to self-love, producing over-indulgence, and fostering the vices of the children. Brotherly love can degenerate into flattery and spoiling. Thus this feeling, which in its principle and aim should be the highest and noblest, can become the most common, the worst, and the most unworthy. Both kinds of love are mentioned in Scripture. The highest and purest tendency of the heart is in the Bible designated by the same name as the more natural, immoral, or disorderly tendency.

ISBE states that while the Hebrew and Greek words for “love” have various shades and intensities of meanings, they may be summed up in some such definition as this: Love, whether used of God or man, is an earnest and anxious desire for and an active and beneficent interest in the well-being of the one loved. Different degrees and manifestations of this affection are recognized in the Scriptures according to the circumstances and relations of life, e.g. the expression of love between husband and wife, parent and child, brethren according to the flesh, and according to grace; between friend and enemy, and finally between God and man. It must not be overlooked, however, that the fundamental idea of love as expressed in the definition

of it is never absent in any one of these relations of life, even though the manifestation thereof may differ according to the circumstances and relations.

The New Bible Dictionary states that the Hebrew word (ahab) for love is in every way as broad in its usage as the English word, and easily the most common word for every range of its meaning. In the Old Testament love, whether human or divine, is deepest possible expression of the personality and of the closeness of personal relations.

The New Bible Dictionary says love (Greek “agape”) is the most common word for all forms of love in the New Testament. This is one of the least common words in classical Greek, where it expresses, on the few occasions that it occurs, that highest and noblest form of love which sees something infinitely precious in its object. Its use in the New Testament derives not directly from classical Greek so much as from the LXX, where it occurs in 95% of all cases where the English version translates the Hebrew “love”, and in every case of love from God to man, man to God, and man to his neighbour. The dignity which the word possesses in the New Testament has been contributed by its use as a vehicle of the Old Testament revelation. It is pregnant with Old Testament associations.

Strong’s says that agape is affection or benevolence in a social or moral sense. It is primarily a love of the will rather than the emotions.

Nelson’s Bible Dictionary states that love for God with the whole personality (Deut 6:5) is God’s demand; though this is not to be understood as meaning merely a punctilious observance of an impersonal divine law but rather as summoning to a relationship of personal devotion created and sustained by the work of God in the human heart. (Deut 30:6)

Strong’s states that Phileo is the alternative word to agapao. It is more naturally used of intimate affection, and of liking to do things which are pleasant. Phileo is to be distinguished from agapeo in this, that phileo more nearly represents tender affection, though there is considerable overlapping of usage between the two words. 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, each word retains its distinctive and essential character.

The goal of this study is to look at the scriptures to see how God conveys love to us through his word

This will be broken down into several categories.

Love is the key element woven throughout the New Testament. It is the element seen in the two great commandments and is more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.
Mark 12:28-34

Love is a word that has been thrown around and pondered for centuries. For us to truly understand love we must understand God for God is love. *1 John 4:8,16*

If we want to become like God we need to learn to love like God. God desires us to be made perfect in love. (*1 John 4:15-21*) Not the love that is of this world but with the love that is of God. If we want to have a love that is like God's we will need to embrace his morals and make them part of our being. For the love of God is a reflection of his moral character.