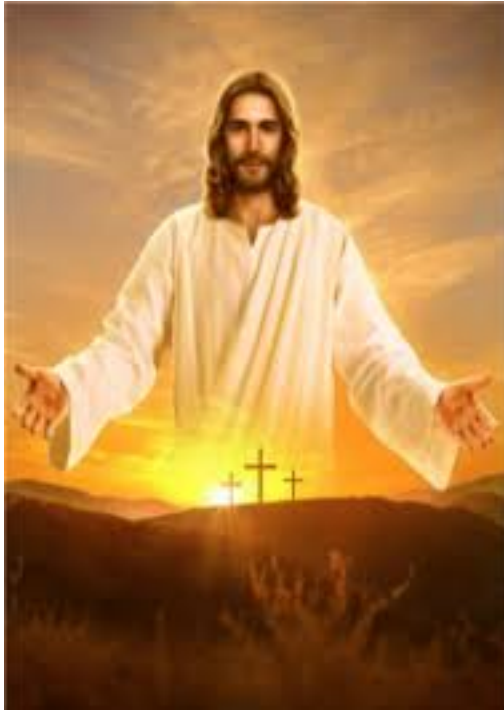


Fueling Station 9: what is Love?

Love in all its fullness: “do you love Me?”

Key to Agape and Phileo Love



Key Introduction:

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Ephesians 5:1-2 ESV

In multiple ways Jesus spoke and demonstrated sacrificial love, a selfless love that surrendered to every aspect and dimension of His Fathers will. The greek word agape is this type of devoted and committed love, the highest form of love. It is the same love that Jesus is looking for in the great commission to go and make disciples that will deny themselves, pick up their crosses and follow Him. The verb form of this word is agapao and means “to prefer”. It is a preferential love that prefers Gods will to any thing else, above all pursuits of the earth and temptations of this world with all its idols. This is the same type of love that receives Gods top rewards in His kingdom!

Key Unlocked:

Hosea 6:6

“ For I desire steadfast love, and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings”

Phileo Love is the love that our church today masters in. This is friendship love that cares for the physical and social needs of a brother or individual.

Agape Love is the love that the church in several ways has blended with Phileo love and also twisted with western sentiment. For the most part the church defines Agape as unconditional love that God gives us freely and that we are to give to one another freely. That no matter how much one sins or continues to sin that if we loved like Jesus then we would just accept and forgive them. Although this has a degree of merit to it, it is woefully short of the intent of Agape love. The author believes that the better semantic that should be used to capture the full intent of Agape loves definition would be the word “sacrificial”.

“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
Romans 5:8 ESV

God the Father showed His sacrificial Agape love for us by sending His only begotten Son to the earth to pay our sin debt. The Son showed His sacrificial Agape love by obeying His Fathers wishes no matter what the cost.

The author would like you to note the two distinct parts found in these examples. The first part is represented as a sacrificial love applied to a world in opposition to God, enemies of God due to our obedience to sin. The second part is represented as a sacrificial love of obedience in order to please the one in charge and to receive His blessings.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:8-11 ESV

The greek verb “agapao” used throughout the NT scriptures literally means “to prefer”. Jesus preferred His Father's will to all else and so He chose to sacrificially obey Him to the point of death. This was rewarded with The Father's great delight and pleasure in His Son and abundant rewards!

“but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.”

John 14:31 ESV

“Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Luke 3:21-22 ESV

The exact same pattern is offered by Jesus to His followers. That if they would Agapao Him in the same manner and finish the same “race” of sacrificial obedient love, both He and the Father would be pleased and abundantly reward.

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.”

John 14:21-24 ESV

This is undoubtedly the promise of the kingdom to come and the promise to reign and be with Jesus and His father!!

Agape is putting God first at all expense. This is the type of love that Jesus asked Peter to do for Him. Peter “do you agape me?”....do you put me first He asks. This passage in John 21 is a beautifully telling depiction of the differences between Phileo love and Agape:

“Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught...
When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love(agapao)me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love(phileo)you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.””
John 21:10, 15 ESV

*It is important to remember that at this moment Peter feels like a failure. He has just denied Jesus three times and decided to go back to his old life of fishing for fish. Knowing this, Jesus comes to him and asks Peter if he “prefers” Him to the fish. Peter understanding that Jesus is using the word agape here basically tells Jesus no but I love(phileo) you affectionately. Peter does not believe that he has what it takes to sacrificially “prefer” Jesus to all else since he has just denied Him.

“He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love(agapao) me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love(phileo) you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.””
John 21:16 ESV

*Note the same question as Jesus persists on restoring Peter to his calling.

“He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love(phileo) me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love(phileo) me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love(phileo) you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”
John 21:17 ESV



It doesn't get any better than this. Jesus now changes to phileo love to meet Peter where he is. Jesus is calling Peter to the highest form of agape love but also confirming the phileo level of love where Peter's "feelings" are. Jesus always loves us where we are but calls us to higher ground to meet with Him. It is very important to point out two more verses in this passage that are very telling to this point:

“So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”
John 21:11, 18-19 ESV

Note that the first encounter Jesus had with Peter when He asked Peter to cast out his net for a catch, the net tore. This time the author John makes a clear distinction that the net was not torn. The symbolism is very rich indeed, Peter will falter in his own power the first time but not the second time around. This is why it was so important that the disciples waited for the Holy Spirit to come at Pentecost. We cannot “sacrificially” agape love without the power source! And this is exactly why Jesus ends His discussion to Peter with how he will “die” for Him. He will now have what it takes to “follow” Him all the way!!

Agape love is a love of preference no matter what the cost. He asks us to obey His commandments to love Him. We, just like Peter, have total access to the “power” of the Holy Spirit to follow Christ all the way and finish our race of faith. But the instructions to the church present this as a choice to put off our old life and put on our new one. If we choose not to run this race in the power of agape love, we will fall short of receiving all the Father wants for us!

* “and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”
Romans 5:5 ESV

*The Holy Spirit was the key to Agape love! The only way Peter and the followers of Christ can please the Father is to live by way of the Spirit of God as a “living sacrifice”!

Revelation 3:9

“9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.”

Sacrificially loving is agape love. God’s love is sacrificial love and He asks us to agape love Him. To call one another out of our sins, out of the world, out of the flesh and to lead one another into holiness and obedience of God...into the knowledge God and into sanctification.

We have been called to a higher love than Phileo Love, we have been called to a complete devotional Agape love. This is the highest form of love that Jesus and His Apostles have asked us to walk in. This will be hard. This is what it means to be a disciple and be a recipient of all of His promises. This higher calling of walking in agape are those who will receive the promises of a disciple...that you will be an overcomer and receive the highest rewards.

Law of first mention:

In Genesis 22:2 we first see the mention of Agape love with Abraham being willing to sacrifice Isaac!

The first mention in New Testament is in Matthew 3:17....“This is my beloved Son.”

1John 2:3-6

“3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

Matthew 24:12 “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” This is in light of the signs of the ends of the age because love has been twisted to mean other things EXCEPT for obeying God’s law. This is the cause of the wars, rumors of wars, nations against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms. False prophets will rise up and deceive many in verse 11.

Mark 10:21

“And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him “You lack one thing: go, see all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

James 5:19-20 “He who turns a sinner in the error of His way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

*This type of death is not a “hell fire” death but a death to fellowship and rewards! We do not define sin correctly either, if we put its definition on par with love we would understand that sin is hate! This is why a God of love hates sin because sin is hateful!

John 13:34

“ A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. “

Notice he uses the term new which actually means: not found exactly like this before. Jesus is describing his sacrificial love of obedience to God, so we also are to love one another with that same type of sacrificial love. the word is Agapate.

Note that in 13:38, Jesus asks Peter, “will you lay down your life for me? “

Key to Agape love can be summed up in one verse:

2 John 1:6 - "This is LOVE (= Agape), that we walk according to His (= God's) Commandments. This is the Commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it."

John 15:9-13

No greater love than Laying down your life for another:

So if you truly love Jesus you will lay down your life for him.

If you truly love another, you will lay down your life for them.

To help others remain (abide) in Christ is laying down your life for another.

“You are my friends if you do what I command you.” John 15:14

There is a way to displease God as His children. God has adopted you into His family through Jesus but Jesus did not complete the race for you.

Paul is teaching the church to continue in sanctification and to know God, not pursuing the world’s passions and desires. Paul is telling the saved church that God will avenge His church on those who do not participate in the process of sanctification.

*Note the distinction between both forms of love!

”Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of

Just like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love(Agapao)one another,“
1 Thessalonians 4:1-9 ESV

This church has done good with Phileo love but he warns this church that they are not taking part in Agape love. Paul is telling this church not to defraud our brother in agape love...if we do this we are rejecting God and the knowledge of God. He is telling the “saved church” to get on board with God’s agape love!

“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”
James 5:19-20 ESV

Love covers a multitude of sin because agape love helps a brother out of his sins!

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”
1 John 4:18 ESV

There is no fear of judgement in Agape love because there is nothing to judge. You are living it out, not living in sin!

Just like breaking our earthly laws and those in law-enforcement we should fear for our good always!

Laboratory Research:

Strong's Concordance

phileó: to love

Original Word: φιλέω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: phileó

Phonetic Spelling: (fil-eh'-o)

Definition: to love

Usage: I love (of friendship), regard with affection, cherish; I kiss.

HELPS Word-studies

5368 philéō (from 5384 /philos, "affectionate friendship") – properly, to show warm affection in intimate friendship, characterized by tender, heartfelt consideration and kinship.

Strong's Concordance

agapaó: to love

Original Word: ἀγαπάω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: agapaó

Phonetic Spelling: (ag-ap-ah'-o)

Definition: to love

Usage: I love, wish well to, take pleasure in, long for; denotes the love of reason, esteem.

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: 25 agapáō – properly to prefer, to love; for the believer, preferring to "live through Christ" (1 Jn 4:9,10), i.e. embracing God's will (choosing His choices) and obeying them through His power. 25 (agapáō) preeminently refers to what God prefers as He "is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16). See 26 (agapē).

With the believer, 25 /agapáō ("to love") means actively doing what the Lord prefers, with Him (by His power and direction). True 25 /agapáō ("loving") is always defined by God – a "discriminating affection which involves choice and selection" (WS, 477). 1 Jn 4:8,16,17 for example convey how loving ("preferring," 25 /agapáō) is Christ living His life through the believer.

Contemplation/Application:

Read the account of Jesus restoring Peter after he denied Him in John 21.

Ask yourself was Jesus trying to restore Peter's fellowship and privilege of being His apostle?

What if Peter continued to refuse the offer of sacrificially serving Jesus would he be sent to hell forever or miss out on his opportunity to prove his devotion to Jesus and be with Him in the coming kingdom?

Remember be a good Berean of Scripture and never stop trying to rightly divide The Word of Truth!

Bonus:

Read 1Corinthians 13 but every time you come to the word love substitute it with "preferred devotion to God". Remember that this passage was written in the midst of a church steeped in sin and on the verge of being "cast off" by the Apostle Paul. Then ask yourself how we as Gods church have misapplied this passage and taken it out of its context. Think about it this way, if we truly understood Agape love to mean sacrificial obedient devotion to God no matter what the cost, when this passage is always applied to the wedding ceremonies, should our divorce rate among Christians be over 50%?