

# DOCTRINE OF LOVE

## I. Introduction.

- A. While love is a complex concept that resists any sort of simple definition, it is perhaps the most celebrated subject in human history.
- B. Since it is so meaningful, many have an opinion as to the nature of love and its significance; however, many conceptions of love proceeds from human viewpoint and are not God's view on the matter.
- C. Love is something that is common to both God and man, existing as an attribute of God (I Jn. 4:8) and as a reality in the human race. Gen. 25:28
- D. However, failure to understand the types and parameters of love has led to a great deal of misplaced emotion, many erroneous interpretations of the Bible, many false conclusions, and some serious misapplications.

## II. Vocabulary.

### A. Hebrew vocabulary.

1. אָהַב (‘ahabh), verb, 218X: to desire, to pant after, to long for, to love. Used of God only in a good sense; used of men in both good and bad ways.
2. אַהֲבָה (‘ahabhah), noun, 34X: generally translated as love; is used of both God and men.
3. דּוֹד (dodh), noun, 61X: love, lover, beloved. Used of an object of love, a loved one, or a relative.
4. צָשַׁק (chashaq), verb, 11X: to be attached, to be joined together; to adhere, to cling or be devoted to someone.
5. אֶגְבַּח (aghabh), verb, 7X: to have inordinate affection, to lust after; used of love for idolatry in Ezek. 23:5,7,9.

### B. Greek vocabulary.

1. ἀγαπάω (agapao), verb, 147X: to love. Used primarily of God's love; however, one must be quite careful to understand the meaning in the context in which it is used and not force a single meaning into each context. It is not strictly technical.
  - a. ἀγάπη (agape), noun, 116X: love. This does not focus on the emotional aspects of love as much as it focuses on love as a personal decision.
  - b. ἀγαπητός (agapetos), adjective, 61X, loved one, beloved.
2. φιλέω (phileo), verb, 25X: to love, to have affection for something or someone.
  - a. φιλία (philia), fem. noun, 1X: friendship, affection.
  - b. φίλος (philos), masc. noun, 29X: a friend, a familiar companion.
  - c. φίλος is joined with numerous other nouns to form compounds that are used to denote love or affection for something. II Tim. 3:4; III Jn. 9
3. Lexicographers and theologians have debated for years as to the exact relationship between these two families of words.
4. There is some small consensus among them but the following observations have been advanced, which may shed some light on the similarities and differences between the words.

- a. Many have recognized that the distinction between the two families is not the distinction between God's love and man's love, a distinction between a higher form of love and a lower form of love, or a distinction between genuine love and pseudo-love.
- b. In some cases, both terms are used in parallel passages, which on the surface suggests a considerable overlapping of meaning between the two families. Matt. 23:6; Lk. 11:43
- c. However, many have correctly noted that the ἀγαπάω family of words is used in commands to love while the φιλέω family is not used as an imperative in the Bible.
- d. This suggests that there is some distinction to be made between the two families.
- e. In that regard, when there is a distinction seen between the words it is that the ἀγαπάω family of words focuses on love as a choice one makes when the focus is on the object of love or the interests of the object of love. Lk. 7:5
- f. When the φιλέω family is used, it denotes the type of affection that proceeds from the emotions and feelings and is generally used of close personal relationships.
- g. In short, while one cannot always eliminate emotion from a discussion about love, the ἀγαπάω family focuses more on the ethics of love while the φιλέω family deals more with the emotion of love.

### III. Definition and description.

- A. The Greek term ἐρώς (eros) relates to the passionate aspect of love between and man and a woman.
  1. The term is not used in the Bible, but the reality of passion and yearning is mentioned in a number of places in both the Old Testament and New Testament. SOS, IThess. 4:5
  2. Sexual love was designed by God for the mutual benefit of RM/RW and is to be enjoyed only in the context of a faithful and monogamous marriage. ICor. 7:2
  3. It has the benefit of providing recreation and ensures the propagation of the human race. Gen. 2:22-25, 1:27-28
  4. The fact that there is no term for sexual love in the New Testament highlights the reality that sex does not constitute love in any true sense of the word.
  5. Love between RM/RW requires the application of both partners toward one another that comes from mutual choices and emotional intimacy, which indicates ἀγάπη and φιλία are already present.
  6. Since this form of love is quite pleasurable, many have abused God's provision by engaging in normal forms of perversion such as fornication and adultery.
  7. Others have abused the normal arrangement of God through abnormal perversions such as homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, etc.
  8. Therefore (due to the danger of immorality), God has commanded RM/RW to apply doctrine in this area regularly (as often as either party chooses). ICor. 7:2-5 "**But because of (sexual) immoralities** (sex outside marriage initiated through the STA), **let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband** (monogamy and fidelity). **Let the husband fulfill his duty** (ὀφειλή--opheile, what is due, that which is owed, a debt, literally, he must pay his debt, indicating that sex becomes an obligation after marriage) **to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband** (Neither party is to deny the other sexually whether the desire comes from emotional affection or the libido/sex drive). **The wife does not have authority** (ἐξουσιάζω exousiazo, to have the right to choose, to exercise authority over) **over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.** (sexual love comes from a reciprocal act of submission of the bodies, which

portrays the mutual respect and natural affection the husband and wife are to demonstrate toward one another).

9. Sexual activity outside the prescribed boundaries of marriage does not bring long-term happiness to anyone; it results in misery and discipline. IThess. 4:3-8; Rev. 2:20-23
- B. Affectionate love (φιιλία--philia) focuses primarily on the emotions, feelings, or affections that are generated in one by the object of the love.
1. It is a natural response based on something (whether rightly or wrongly) that prompts those feelings toward the object of love. Jn. 5:19-20
  2. The emotional aspect of love may be prompted by some close personal relationship (Jn. 11:3), having common ideas or desires (Jn. 15:19), or from some admirable trait or desirable quality in the object of love. Jn. 16:27
  3. The object of love may be legitimate (ICor. 16:22) or inappropriate. Matt. 6:5, 23:6
  4. While this type of love is not commanded in the Bible, it is understood that the authors of Scripture expected it among believers in local churches. Rom.12:10; 1Thess.4:9; Heb.13:1; 1Pet.1:22
- C. ἀγάπη (agape) is the term most often applied to God's love, which is part of His essence (Jn. 4:8), but it is not strictly used of Divine love. Lk. 6:32
1. The primary difference between ἀγάπη and φιιλία is best explained by the difference between the intellect and the emotions.
  2. This love proceeds more from the intellect and volitional choices with regard to the object of love; it does not primarily focus on how one feels about the object. Matt. 5:43-44
  3. In fact, emotional considerations must sometimes be set aside or one will never effectively demonstrate this type of love. Prov. 13:24; IICor. 2:4
  4. ἀγάπη does not depend on the merit of the object; rather, it is demonstrated by the mental attitude willingness (deliberate choice) to set aside one's own ideas, plans, welfare, and possibly feelings and do what is in the best interest of the object of love. Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:10
  5. God's love does not exist apart from His righteousness and justice, which would reduce it to a maudlin or emotional form of love. Jer. 9:24; Isa. 61:8
  6. His love is not motivated by personal considerations, nor is it based on the merits of the recipients; it is based solely on His righteous character. Eph.2:3-5; 1Joh.4:10
- D. While there is a good deal of overlap in the semantic range of these two terms, each one has a particular nuance and they should not be regarded as strict synonyms in all cases; one must always be sensitive to the context in which the words are found.
1. ἀγάπη is the type of love that proceeds from the core character of a person with no regard for the merit of the object, emphasizing the will of the one loving.
  2. φιιλία deals with the subjective feelings or emotions that are aroused in one by a particular object of love.
  3. Since φιιλία relates to the emotions, it is never used in commands in the New Testament; since ἀγάπη relates to the will, it is often used in commands to love.

#### IV. The categories of love.

##### A. Category 1 love—the believer's love for God.

1. Many, if not most believers make claims as to the reality of their loyalty and love for God. Jn. 21:15-17
2. However, if we clearly understand the standards by which God defines and evaluates love for His person, we should not be taken in by professions of love that lack substance. Isa. 29:13; Ezek. 33:31

3. Love toward God is commanded and must therefore be a volitional decision. Deut. 11:1; Matt. 22:37
  4. Category 1 love is also directed toward the person of Christ. IPet. 1:8
  5. Love for God is not related to how one feels about God but is characterized by Jesus as relating to the consistent intake and application of Bible doctrine. Jn. 14:15,21,23,24
    - a. Just as there are various degrees of intensity in human relationships, there are degrees of intensity with respect to love for God that are related to obedience. Jn. 15:14
    - b. The **friend of God** refers to the believer that manifests a very high level of doctrine and application; this is seen in the life of Abraham. James 2:23
    - c. Those that seek the friendship and approbation of the cosmos manifest that they are not friends of God. James 4:4; 1Jn. 2:15-17
  6. While we are not strictly commanded to feel a particular emotion, it is intriguing to note that Paul placed a curse on those that do not have affection for Jesus Christ. 1Cor. 16:22
- B. Category 2 love—right man and right woman/marriage and family.
1. This relationship was established by God in the Garden of Eden for the benefit of Adam and for blessing the human race. Gen. 2:18-25
  2. In the beginning, all three aspects of love were present (concern for each other, affection for each other, and sex with each other) and this is necessary for any marriage to be successful. Eph. 5:25; Tit. 2:4
  3. This relationship is the only legitimate, non-sinful relationship in which one can express and enjoy sexual love, which is commanded of both parties. 1Cor. 7:2-4
    - a. Mutual affection and emotional support is necessary for the sexual aspect of marriage to be enjoyed to the maximum.
    - b. Sex is not to be withheld or used as a weapon in this relationship. 1Cor. 7:5
  4. The husband's highest expression of love for his wife is to be characterized by understanding the principle of the weaker vessel, and the concept of self-sacrifice. IPet. 3:7; Eph. 5:25,28
  5. The wife's basic responsibility is to love her husband, which is to be characterized by respect and submission to the authority that God has placed over her. Eph. 5:22-24; Tit. 2:4-5; IPet. 3:1-6
    - a. The highest expression of loves is to become her husband's friend, which will enable her to submit to his authority even under the most extreme of circumstances.
    - b. Generally, women begin the marriage relationship as the more flexible of the partners; however, the real danger is that failure to consistently love her husband can cause her to turn into a shrew.
    - c. Note that Sarai (contentious) began as a shrew and grew into a princess, a great woman of God, who was characterized by willing submission to Abraham. Gen. 17:15, 18:12; IPet. 3:5-6
  6. Both the husband and wife must recognize that the Word of God never sanctions the breaking of the marriage vows; divorce is not a biblical option. Matt. 19:3-10; 1Cor. 7:10-13
  7. It is permitted under only two circumstances and in neither case is it commanded.
    - a. The case of immorality. Matt. 19:9
    - b. The case of an unbeliever abandoning a believer. 1Cor. 7:15
  8. Category 2 love also includes parental love for children.
    - a. Natural affection between parent and child is expected in a normal home; this also includes the concept of normal, loving discipline. Tit. 2:4; Heb. 12:7
    - b. While the Bible envisions that children are to be respectful and obedient to their parents, such is not always the case. Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20

- c. In such cases of disobedience, natural affections and warm emotions need to be overruled and the parents are required to administer consistent discipline, which must begin very early in the child's life. Prov. 13:24 *The Hebrew has the idea of diligently (regularly) or early.*
  - d. Consistent verbal instruction coupled with physical discipline (as needed) is the standard espoused by the Word of God. Deut. 6:6-7; Prov. 29:15; Eph. 6:4
  - e. The parents must deal with the problem of the child's sin nature consistently and cannot allow themselves to be deterred by the child's tears. Prov. 23:13
  - f. The parents are the first line of instruction and defense against the STA; failure to fulfill that responsibility brings shame on the parents and discipline on the child. Prov. 22:15, 29:15,17
  - g. Parents that will not effectively follow through in this area demonstrate that they do not actually love their child; protests to the contrary notwithstanding. Prov. 13:24, 19:18
  - h. Normal physical discipline does not include physical abuse; nor does it include oppressing the child with unrealistic expectations or demands. Col. 3:21
- C. Category 3 love—love for personal friends.
- 1. This aspect of love is best demonstrated by the relationship of David and Jonathan. ISam.18:1-4; IISam.1:26
  - 2. A true friend loves consistently at all times, maintaining loyalty and allegiance to his friend. Pro.17:17; 18:24
  - 3. A real friend can be counted on to respond in adverse situations or unexpected times of testing. Lk. 11:5-8
  - 4. A true friend does not slander or malign; he can be counted on to tell you what you need to hear, even when it is painful. Psa.15:3; Prov. 27:6,9
  - 5. A real friend is not influenced by your wealth or lack thereof; however, this is not the norm for many superficial people. Prov. 19:4,6,7
  - 6. The maximum expression of category 3 love is physical sacrifice. Jn. 15:13
  - 7. Both category 2 and 3 love, even in regard to immediate family, are not to take precedence over the principles of the truth and cause the believer to compromise his love for God. Deut. 13:6-8; Matt. 10:34-37
- D. Category 4 love—love for your enemies.
- 1. This category has caused a great deal of confusion in Christendom since many do not understand that this is to be applied on a personal level and not on a corporate or national level.
  - 2. It is entirely inappropriate to apply under this category of love toward criminal types or national enemies, who must simply receive justice. Gen. 9:5-6; Deut. 7:2-3
  - 3. Love for one's enemies was taught in the Mosaic Law and is not a principle that is unique to the New Testament. Ex. 23:4-5; Lk. 6:27,35
  - 4. Love for one's enemies has nothing to do with how you feel about them emotionally since one would not normally possess affection for those seeking his harm.
  - 5. Category 4 love demands that you focus on what is in the best interest of your enemy and involves the following.
    - a. Doing good to them as appropriate opportunities arise. Rom. 12:20
    - b. Avoiding revenge tactics when they abuse you personally. Lk. 6:29; Rom. 12:17,19
    - c. Avoiding mental attitude sins. Matt. 5:43-44
    - d. Seeking to live in peace with those that are hostile or antagonistic. Rom. 12:18
    - e. Praying for them. Lk. 6:28; 23:34; Acts 7:60

6. As you apply toward your enemies, you imitate God's love as seen at the cross and demonstrate your relative level of maturity. Matt. 5:44-48
  7. Therefore, in order to effectively demonstrate this type of love you must put your natural emotional responses aside and bring the Divine viewpoint to bear on the matter.
- E. Category 5 love—love for the royal family.
1. This category of love is commanded and is primarily directed toward believers in the local church. Rom. 12:10; IICor. 2:8; Gal. 5:13
  2. That does not mean that we are not to apply toward other believers outside the local church, but to focus our primary attention on those God has placed in your immediate periphery in this local body. IICor. 8:7-8; IJn. 6
  3. The leadership and membership of the local church are to pray for spiritual excellence in this area of love. Phil. 1:9; IThess.3:12; IIThess. 3:5
  4. Love for the royal family must begin in the mental attitude and not consist merely of words; it must encompass the appropriate applications as well. IJn. 3:16-18
  5. The author of Hebrews exhorts believers to reflect on how they can encourage one another in terms of love, Divine good production, and consistency in Bible class. Heb. 10:24-25
  6. We demonstrate love for other believers when we:
    - a. Exercise patience toward them. Eph.4:2
    - b. Forgive offenses, both intentional and unintentional. Eph.4:32; Jn. 13:14
    - c. Help them with physical needs. IJn.3:17,18; Jam.2:16
    - d. Avoid twitting weaker believers in the non-essentials of the Christian way of life. Rom.14:1,14,-15
    - e. Show proper respect and appreciation for those that labor in the office of pastor-teacher or deacon. IThess. 5:12-13
    - f. Show hospitality. Heb. 13:1-2; IIIJn. 5-6
    - g. Avoid mental attitude and verbal sins such as bitterness, anger, gossip, slander, etc. Gal. 5:14-15
    - h. Avoid phoniness and hypocrisy. Rom. 12:9; IPet. 1:22
    - i. Avoid partiality. James 2:8-9
    - j. Separate from reversionistic believers. ICor. 5:1ff; IIThess. 3:6,14-15
    - k. Receive back the one who recovers from reversionism. IICor. 2:4-8

V. God's essence and love.

- A. Love is an attribute of the Divine essence. IJn. 4:8
1. Love is one of the ten attributes of God; when considered alongside the attribute of immutability this indicates that His love is unchanging. Mic. 7:18-20
  2. All the attributes of God must function in harmony with one another, particularly the attributes of righteousness and justice.
  3. Therefore, God's love only functions in accord with His righteousness and justice, which does not allow Him to alter or coerce volition. Ex. 34:6-7
  4. Therefore, while God loves all mankind and has its best interests at heart, He must limit His activity toward men to those things that do not violate free will or His own essence.
  5. God demonstrates love for mankind by providing them life and living grace for His enemies. Matt. 5:45
  6. God has further demonstrated His love for mankind by making every provision for each one of them to share His eternal life. Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:7-8
  7. Therefore, in a general sense God loves all people (agapao), but God has a special affinity (phileo) for His Son and for positive believers. Jn. 5:20, 16:27

8. Divine love is described by Paul in First Corinthians. ICor. 13:4-8
- B. God's love in salvation.
1. Due to the fall of Adam, all mankind possesses the genetic sin nature, and come into this world in a state of spiritual death. Rom. 5:12
  2. The fruit of the STA is personal sins, which are common to all men and which are violations of God's righteous character. Rom. 3:23, 5:19
  3. Therefore, mankind is alienated from God by birth and by practice, hostile to God and His interests, and fully deserving of His wrath. Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:3, 4:18
  4. In spite of these facts, God's love motivated Him to intervene on behalf of His enemies by providing all that was necessary for them to have and maintain a relationship with Him. Rom. 5:8
  5. Without violating His own righteous, God provided the potential for salvation to all mankind through the offering of His Son. Jn. 3:16; IICor. 5:21
  6. The sole requirement to enjoy eternal salvation is simply faith in His Son. Jn. 3:18, 20:31; Acts 16:31
  7. However, He will not violate Divine institution #1 and force anyone to accept the free offer of salvation.
  8. Although God loves all mankind He will make no exceptions in matters of volition and eternal consequence; He will cast the majority of mankind into the lake of fire. Matt. 7:13-14; Rev. 20:15

## VI. Love and GAP.

- A. God commands believers to demonstrate love beyond that which is common to the natural man. Matt. 5:44-46
- B. Love is to be the motivation for all we do and it is the fulfillment of the Law. ICor. 16:14; Rom. 13:10
- C. Since one cannot effectively demonstrate love for someone he does not know, God has provided the GAP system so believers may come to know Him. ICor. 2:9-16
  1. God's truth does not originate from the source of men. Vs. 9
  2. God has chosen to reveal His truth to adjusted men through the Holy Spirit. Vs. 10-12
  3. Bible doctrine has its own unique vocabulary. Vs. 13
  4. The unbeliever does not accept the realities of God's plan, and are incapable understanding the realities of Bible doctrine. Vs. 14
  5. The believer that is positive and possesses Bible doctrine is capable of making correct assessments of issues in life, but is not effectively examined by the unbeliever. Vs. 15
- D. During the vast majority of our dispensation, God has provided a single communicator for each local church, who demonstrates His love for God by consistently feeding the sheep allotted to him. Jn. 21:15-17
- E. As believers learn the realities of Bible doctrine, it enables them to effectively love God since love for Him is based on knowing and applying doctrine. Jn. 14:21,23
- F. All communicators should pray for the multiplication of love in their congregations, which comes from the intake and possession of Bible doctrine. Jude 2; IIPet. 1:2
- G. Bible doctrine in the soul provides the frame of reference for believers to understand and make the proper love applications. Phil. 1:9-10
- H. The goal of a sound ministry, which is devoted to the teaching of Bible doctrine, is the proper display of love by each believer. ITim. 1:5
  1. In order to meet God's qualifications love must meet certain standards.
  2. It must originate from a pure/clean heart, which is the current you in fellowship, having put aside the STA and proceeding under the filling of the Holy Spirit.

3. Love should come from a good conscience, which is one that has been programmed with God's norms and standards, and which is obeyed regularly.
4. Love must proceed from a non-hypocritical faith in the truth, faith that manifests itself via the proper conduct.
  - I. Although the Law taught men that they should love their neighbors, it did not provide the inner dynamic to do so. Lev. 19:18
  - J. The love of God is provided to believers through the Holy Spirit, Who was given to us at the point of salvation. Rom. 5:5
  - K. When we walk in fellowship we walk in love, which is part of the fruit that is produced by the Holy Spirit in the abiding believer. Gal. 5:22

VII. Inappropriate objects of love.

- A. Anything that belongs to someone else, his house, his details, and especially not his wife. Ex. 20:17
- B. The cosmos, which is the organized world system, arranged under Satan's leadership, and organized on the principles of force, greed, selfishness, ambition, and pleasure. IJn. 2:15; James 4:4
- C. Money and the details of life. Matt. 6:19-21; ITim. 6:6-10; Heb. 13:5; IJn. 2:15
- D. Yourself. IITim. 3:2
- E. Pleasure. IITim. 3:4; Lk. 8:14
- F. Lies/darkness. Jn. 3:19; Rev. 22:15
- G. Your physical life. Rev. 12:11
- H. Excessive sleep. Prov. 20:13
- I. It should be noted that some of the above items can be legitimate in their proper place and God provides certain blessings for the positive believer. Rom. 8:32; ITim. 6:17
- J. When anything comes into conflict with Bible doctrine and God's will and the believer makes them more important than doctrine, it is then that he is said to love them.