

1Co25 – Holy Spirit – How Do I Get To Agape? – 1 Corinthians 13
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Open your Bibles. Title of the message – still in the Holy Spirit mini-series within 1 Corinthians – “How Do I Get To Agape?”

Last week we had a great time diving into God’s agape love in 1 Corinthians 13. We said God’s agape love in 1 Corinthians 13 is the *environment* we’re called to live in and operate the spiritual gifts in. Like the ocean is to the fish and the air is to the birds, agape love is where we are called to exist in as Christians, and that was all great until we started “looking closer” at what God’s agape love really looks like, and then we said, “*How do we get there?*”

How do I get to agape love from where I am at today? How do I get there from here? I’ve put my faith in Jesus, I’m doing my best to follow him. But, I did not score very high on the Agape Love Test we took last week.

So, I said last week, we were going to take today and look at the *how*. *How do we get to agape!*

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, we need to know how do we get there from here. Lord, for those of us who have truly surrendered our lives to you, and if we haven’t we pray you would impress on us even at this moment to surrender our lives to you. Lord we have your Spirit in us. We call ourselves Christians. How do we get to agape love? How do we get to your Love? Show us today. Give us inspiration to drive, to press, to seek out how do we go from where we’re at today to living in the atmosphere of agape. Show us Lord and inspire us and do it in us miraculously by your Spirit, and for your glory and in your name Jesus, amen.*

I really can’t do any more than barely scratch the surface on this subject in the time we have today. This is a lifetime transformation, to go from where we’re at to agape love. All I can really do today is outline it – give you a taste for it. Hopefully inspire you to want to learn more and be more transformed into God’s agape love.

So, let me give you my two favorite books on this subject. Both really written by Nancy Misler (with Chuck Misler’s name).

The Way of Agape – Understanding God’s Agape Love

Be Ye Transformed – Understanding God’s Transformation

The agape love we looked at last week in 1 Corinthians 13 is purely God's love. This is *not* a love you can have *apart* from God *pouring it* into your life and then it bubbling up out of you.

God's agape love is opposite of the love we have in our own self-nature. Romans 5:5 says God's love is poured into our hearts by God in the Holy Spirit so that it can bubble out of us. That is the only way we get it.

Agape love is God's love (and God's life) on display through us and so the only possible way for us to live in God's agape love is to have God's life replace our life. We give up our "old life" to be *crucified* and God gives us *new life* "in Christ." And then we walk in that new life by being continually emptied of our old life and by being continually filled with God's new life.

Living out God's agape love is the supernatural transformation of our lives. It's the life of Jesus Christ living through us. This is the greatest miracle of transformation we will ever see and this is the greatest miracle of transformation others will ever see in us.

And so, the question today is – How Do We Get to Agape?

There are three big events in a Christian's life.

#1) SALVATION

Occurs the moment you truly put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. It comes by God's grace and through your faith alone and it is instantaneous.

#3 [not 2]) GLORIFICATION

Occurs the moment a Christian dies. Instantly we are in the presence of the Lord. This is *all God*, we don't have to do a thing here.

#2 [in-between 1 & 3]) SANCTIFICATION

This is where our lives are transformed for the glory of God in this life. This is where other people see God in us and this is where other people experience God through us.

Last week, 1 Corinthians 13 made it crystal clear there is no better way for people to see God in us and experience God through us than us living in and showing agape love.

But here's the difference in the sanctification part of the Christian life. In the transformation of our lives here so that people can see God in us we have a role, we have a part. We must actively join God in his supernatural transformation of our lives and if

we don't actively join God in this process, then our lives will never be supernaturally transformed. And my guess is you've seen Christians who have not yet accepted their role in the transformation of their lives.

So here are four big requirements that make up our role (our part) to get us to living out God's agape love. These are *not* really *steps*. They're really four "ongoing requirements" to "get us to agape" and of course the pre-requisite to all this is you genuinely surrendering your life to Jesus Christ, putting your full faith in him as Savior and Lord.

So then here are the four "ongoing requirements."

- 1) **Become a Living Sacrifice**
- 2) **Continually Crucify Self**
- 3) **Take Every Thought Captive**
- 4) **Obey God – Not Your Feelings**

And all of this – *all of it* – can only be done with the power of the Holy Spirit at work inside you.

The agape love chapter (1 Corinthians 13) is right in the middle of the Holy Spirit section of 1 Corinthians because you cannot get close to agape love without the work and the power of the Holy Spirit inside you. And so, throughout this process, you've got to learn how to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, let's look at the four ongoing requirements for "getting to agape."

- 1) **Become a Living Sacrifice**

Romans 12:1 (AMP)

1 I APPEAL to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy ((which means) *devoted, consecrated* (set apart)) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and (your) spiritual worship.

This may be THE single most powerful verse in the New Testament to understand the beginning of the *supernatural transformation* of God in our lives. I can't teach the entire verse – it would take the entire message. But this verse (with verse 2) is the core of *living the transformed life* become a living sacrifice. A sacrifice is something that is consumed for the glory of God, with no "self" left.

(And so, Romans 12:1 says) ***make a decisive dedication – to surrender all that you are as a living sacrifice – to be consumed for God’s glory - holy (set apart) and well pleasing to God***

We must be willing to completely give ourselves to God (holding nothing back) for his glory in our lives. This is the first “ongoing requirement” to get to agape. Become a living sacrifice.

Now, since I can only do an overview here, for every one of these four “ongoing requirements” I’m going to give you three verses for further study.

Here are three verses for **Become a Living Sacrifice**

2 Timothy 2:20-21 – Philippians 2:17 – Hebrews 13:15-16

Here’s the second ongoing requirement.

2) Continually Crucify Self

This is written dramatically because it is so critically important to remember every day – in every situation – if we want God’s agape love to show in our lives we must continually crucify self. Because – in every situation – every day wither the life of self is on display or the life of God is on display.

To crucify self means to decisively remove the self-generated response or reaction in every situation. It is consciously denying our own thoughts, emotions and desires – crucifying them – so that the life of Jesus Christ in us can come out.

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

20 My old self (my Self-Life) *has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me . . .*

The Bible makes this very clear – at any given moment either our old sin nature is in control of our life or our new Christ nature is in control of our life. And in order for our new Christ nature to be in control of our life, we must decisively and consciously crucify our old self nature. We must continually crucify our self-generated thoughts, emotions and desires.

The New Testament has a ton to say about continually crucifying self but here are your verses for further study.

Ephesians 4:17-5:20 – Colossians 3:1-17 – Galatians 5:16-26

Here's the third ongoing requirement.

First – Become a Living Sacrifice

Second – Continually Crucify Self

3) Take Every Thought Captive

This is something we have got to come to grips with. Our lives are controlled and directed by *what* we set our minds on.

What we set our minds on – is where we go.

In every sport you can name, it is a well-known fact what you focus on is where your body is going to go.

We raised our kids riding motorcycles and I would always tell them, “Where you look is where you’re going to go.” So, don’t set your mind on the ditch, or you’re going to ride right into the ditch.

2 Corinthians 10:4–5 (ESV)

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

We are not in this battle to live out agape love using weapons of the flesh (like own effort or psychology). We are in this battle using God’s divine power to destroy strongholds in our own minds.

Don’t you know we have strongholds in our own minds? Things we think and the way we see things, how we perceive and interpret things. We have strongholds in our own minds.

And we have got to destroy the strongholds (in our minds) that are set against God’s new life in us. We have got to destroy every lofty opinion (in our minds) that is raised against the knowledge and will of God and in order to do that we have got to take every thought captive.

The battle to live in agape love is won or lost in our thought life.

If we will take every thought captive and have our minds completely renewed. Then our actions will actually begin to look like the new life of Jesus Christ in us.

Romans 12:2 (NLT)

2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think . . .

I could go on and on about this one (like all of them, really) but I won't – instead here are a few verses for you.

Isaiah 55:7 – Ephesians 4:22-24 – Romans 8:5-6

And here is the fourth ongoing requirement.

First Become a Living Sacrifice

Second Continually Crucify Self

Third Take Every Thought Captive

4) Obey God – Not Your Feelings

You have the power of the Creator God of the universe living inside of you, in the Person of the Holy Spirit. But what the Holy Spirit will *not do* is over-ride your will. You choose to obey and the Holy Spirit becomes your power to obey.

You may have to choose to obey God sixty times a minute because your flesh is so strong, but if you will continue to choose to obey the Holy Spirit will grow in being your power to obey all the way until your actions align with God's will instead of aligning with your flesh.

And we must continue to choose to obey God until our feelings line up with our obedience.

1 Samuel 15:22 (NLT)

22 . . . "What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice . . .

This verse is talking about the danger of paying lip service to the Lord. We can't *say* we want to live our God's agape love and then constantly *give in* to our ungodly responses to people. We've got to choose to obey contrary to our feeling and the Holy Spirit will be our *power to obey*.

Jesus said in John 14:15-16,

John 14:15-16 (NLT)

15 "If you love me, obey my commandments.

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you [the Holy Spirit], who will never leave you.

Our obedience is in direct response to our love for Jesus Christ and as we obey him in displaying agape love to others, the Holy Spirit will *empower us* and *transform us* into his image from *glory to glory*.

Here are your verses on obeying God regardless of your feelings.

Romans 6:5-14 – Matthew 22:36-40 – Psalm 40:6-8

So, here it is in review.

1) Become a Living Sacrifice

Be willing to give *everything you are* to God *for his glory* holding *nothing of self* back.

2) Continually Crucify Self

This is an aggressive denial of *thoughts, emotions and actions* that come from your self-nature.

3) Take Every Thought Captive

We've got to realize the power our thought life has over our action. What we set our mind on is where we're *going to go*. If we will *determinedly and deliberately* set our minds on the agape love of God (becoming a living sacrifice and continually crucifying self) then the Holy Spirit will be our power to begin actually living out the agape love of God.

4) Obey God – Not Your Feelings

In the end we have to choose to love with agape love against what our self-nature may be crying out. We have to trust God enough to choose to love the way he calls us to love no matter *how we feel*, no matter *what we think*.

IF WE WILL

Become a Living Sacrifice

Continually Crucify Self

Take Every Thought Captive

Obey God – Not Your Feelings

the Holy Spirit inside of us will give us the supernatural power to allow the agape love of God to genuinely come out of us.

1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (NLT)

4 [Agape] is patient and kind. [Agape] is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. [Agape] does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

6 [Agape] does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

7 [Agape] never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and [Agape] endures through every circumstance.

Let's pray. *Agape is patient and kind. Lord, that's what we want. Not in our own strength but by the power of your Spirit, we want to be transformed into patience and kindness at your level. Agape is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Lord, these are the pride sins. God, we pray that you would crush our pride. Lord we can't love with any pride and though we'll fight it until we see you face to face we pray that we would crucify it daily so that we can love this way without jealousy or boasting or being proud or rude. Agape does not demand its own way. Lord, our whole culture teaches us to demand our own way. Lord allow us to swim against the current, to go against the flow. Agape is not irritable. Give us that peace, Lord, with irritating circumstances and people. Agape keeps no record of being wronged. There's some here that are carrying hurts from decades, and decades ago, keeping perfect record of wrongs. God drive us to forgiveness and release of that. Agape does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Allow us to see evil and call it evil and rejoice with the truth. Agape never gives up – Lord, agape never gives up. You'll never give up on us and we'll never give up on those you call us to love. It never loses faith – your agape love Lord is always hopeful and your agape love endures through every circumstance, it never fails. Do that in us, Lord. Get us from where we're at, to there. For your glory, Jesus, and in your name, amen.*