

# LOVE

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self control. Against such things there is no law.  
-Galatians 5:22-23

## What is love?

There are many Greek words that translate to love in English but they do not all mean the same thing. Let's examine some Greek words for love and what they mean.

- **Sensual Love: erōs**, denoting acquisitive affection, often connected with sexual love<sup>1</sup>

Eros represents longing and desire. This kind of love thinks of our own physical needs. Eros is appropriate in a marriage and should be a part of a Godly union and can be selfless when displayed in a god-centered marriage.

*1 Corinthians 7:3-4 - A husband should give to his wife her sexual rights, and likewise a wife to her husband. It is not the wife who has the rights to her own body, but the husband. In the same way, it is not the husband who has the rights to his own body, but the wife. (NET)*

Although this is not the kind of love listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit, it is something to put into practice as part of a healthy, Godly marriage.

- **Friendship Love: philia** (and the cognate verb *phileō*, 'to love'), having to do with reciprocal friendship, including all the emotional life that sustains such friendship<sup>2</sup>

This type of love is often developed out of like interests. Maybe you share a common hobby, you're in the same stage of life. A friendship is built through shared experience and over time, you build a love for each other that is manifested in a friendship. This type of love can turn over time, can become stale, or drift apart. People who have had this type of love for us, may even betray us. Maybe we connected with someone over shared experiences or habits that were *unhealthy*. A friendship built from there may give us philia love, however, if we do not apply the fruit of the Spirit in our friendships, they will not be as fulfilling as God intended for us and can even be opposite of Godly.

*James 4:4 - You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (ESV)*

*1 Peter 3:8 - Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. (NIV)*

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, D. A. 2000. "Love." In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, electronic ed., 646. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

- **Self Love: philautia**, a state of appreciation for oneself<sup>2</sup>

*2 Timothy 3:1-5 - But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup> People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—<sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. (NIV)*

Contrary to what society teaches, God has not called us to love ourselves. “According to God’s Word, if you are a child of God, the Truth is: You are created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27). He loves you, and you are precious to Him. (Eph. 2:4, 1 John 3:1). However, we don’t bestow our worth on ourselves. Nor do we experience the fullness of God’s love by telling ourselves how lovable we are. To the contrary, Jesus taught that it is in losing our lives that we find them. The message of self-love can quickly put people on a lonely, one way path to misery.” “So, for most of us, our need is not to learn to love ourselves more, but to learn to deny ourselves more, but to learn to deny our-selves so we can do that which does not come naturally – to love God and other’s selflessly.”<sup>3</sup>

*Luke 9:23-24 - Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. (NIV)*

- **True Love: agape**, denoting a self-sacrificing commitment to another’s good<sup>4</sup>

Agape always flows from what is right and best. Agape is not as much a feeling as it is a response. We will discover that God commands us to agape. He is not commanding us toward a feeling. He is commanding us to surrender to an act of His Spirit which results in obedience. Emotion may accompany agape, but emotion and agape are not the same.<sup>5</sup>

## How can we put our love into action?

Since agape is an action, a choice to love that is manifest in what we do. How can we be sure that our love is agape? Every mention of love in 1 Corinthians 13 uses the Greek word: agape. We can look to 1 Corinthians as an example of how we should act out agape love.

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7 - Love is **patient**, love is **kind**. It **does not envy**, it **does not boast**, it is **not proud**. It **does not dishonor others**, it is **not self-seeking**, it is **not easily angered**, it **keeps no record of wrongs**. Love **does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth**. It **always protects**, **always trusts**, **always hopes**, **always perseveres**. (NIV)*

<sup>2</sup> What is Love?, Christianity.com, Salem Web Network, August 15, 2019, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-is-love.html>

<sup>3</sup> Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, Chicago, Moody Publishers, 2001, Kindle Book

<sup>4</sup> Carson, D. A. 2000. “Love.” In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, electronic ed., 646. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>5</sup> Moore, Living Beyond, 59

**Patience:** exhibit internal and external control in difficult circumstance, long-suffering<sup>6</sup>

**Kind:** play the part of a kind person (full of service to others)<sup>7</sup>

**Does not envy:** does not have jealousy or a desire to set one's heart on or commit to a goal of becoming or having what you see in others.

**Does not boast:** no excessive proud and boastful talk about one's achievements or possessions.<sup>8</sup>

**Not Proud:** not to puff up; to be inflated, not thinking excessively highly of oneself.<sup>9</sup>

**Does not dishonor others:** behave unseemly, disgrace someone<sup>10</sup>

Do not try to embarrass others. Some people think it's funny to embarrass people around them. Even people they claim to love. Maybe they are only expressing a natural philia love and NOT agape.

**Not self-seeking:** not trying to seek what is lost or what is due.

This word carries two nuances that should be considered together. First, it means "to seek something that has been lost." Second, it also means "to demand what is due." The word implies serious effort, and can be used of seeking information and of seeking to perform an action.<sup>11</sup>

**Not easily angered:** not quick to be upset, be angered, irritated, distressed with the intention of spurring on, or stirring up intense argument, sharp contention implying exasperation, or intense unreconcilable differences of opinion<sup>7</sup>

This goes further than just being angry. The Bible tells us we can be angry and sin not (Eph. 4:26). But at what speed are we becoming angry and what are we doing when we get angry? Are we jumping to conclusions and anger is our first response? Do we do our research and find out someone's intentions before we choose anger?

**Keeping no record of wrongdoing:** The word record here points to more than just keeping a list of someone's wrongs but also the act of thinking on or calculating about, contemplating on the wrongdoing of someone else. Wrongdoing here is referring to actual evil and wickedness.

We've all had to catch ourselves in our thoughts, meditating on the mistakes of others, thinking about what they should have done and how they did us wrong. Even those thoughts are not consistent with agape love.

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<sup>6</sup> Swanson, James. 1997. In *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*, electronic ed. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>7</sup> Souter, Alexander. 1917. In *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 284. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>8</sup> Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University Press

<sup>9</sup> Williams, William A. 2014. "Pride." In *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, edited by Douglas Mangum, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, and Rebekah Hurst. Lexham Bible Reference Series. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>10</sup> Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie. 1996. In *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 267. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>11</sup> Merrill, Randall. 2014. "Seeking." In *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, edited by Douglas Mangum, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, and Rebekah Hurst. Lexham Bible Reference Series. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

**Does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth:** “The truth” is the Gospel truth, the inseparable ally of love (Eph. 4:15; 3 John 12). The false charity which compromises “the truth” by glossing over “iniquity” is thus condemned...<sup>12</sup>

*Psalm 119*

<sup>97</sup> *Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

<sup>98</sup> *Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.*

<sup>99</sup> *I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.*

<sup>100</sup> *I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.*

<sup>101</sup> *I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.*

<sup>102</sup> *I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me.*

<sup>103</sup> *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

<sup>104</sup> *Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*<sup>13</sup>

**Protects:** The ESV interprets this as “bears all things.” Which, explains it a little closer to the Greek meaning. It endures without divulging to the world its distress. Literally, holding fast, like a water tight vessel: the charitable man *contains himself* from giving vent to what selfishness would prompt under personal hardship.<sup>14</sup>

Do you ever see someone who carries a lot but does not succumb to those pressures? The strength to do that comes from the fruit of the Spirit; from love. You could put a lot on a person full of love and they can hold it, both for themselves and for others.

**Trusts:** Think of someone who doesn’t second guess or question every word you say. They trust the words of Godly people. This is not a blind trust, but a trust that is given to those who are worthy of trust.

**Hopes:** Even when most people would lose their hope, the person with the fruit of the Spirit will still have hope.

**Perseveres:** Always perseveres brings the thought of steadfastness. The verb (hypomenō) denotes not a patient, resigned acquiescence, but an active, positive fortitude. It is the endurance of the soldier who, in the thick of the battle, is undismayed, but continues to lay about him vigorously. Love is not overwhelmed, but manfully plays its part whatever the difficulties.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, David, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson. n.d. *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation*. Vol. VI. London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

<sup>13</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2016. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, David, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson. n.d. *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation*. Vol. VI. London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

<sup>15</sup> Morris, Leon. 1985. *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 7. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.