



# gracefellowship

Everything  
October 20, 2019  
Love

**:: 2 Peter 1:3-5**

**3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**

**4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.**

**5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;**

**6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;**

**7 and to godliness mutual affection; and to mutual affection, *love*.**

We have finally reached the end of this passage where Peter has described the characteristics of a godly life. Like anything else in life, it's not important that you simply know these things, but that you put them into action in your life. We have a living and active faith that God is continually challenging us to grow in and to mature in as we follow Him. This is a life-long pursuit and something we are never quite finished with. That why Peter tells us in verse 8, "For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I'm grateful for Paul speaking last weekend while my family was away on Fall Break! Paul talked about mutual affection, or brotherly love. The Greek word is Philadelphia- it's a love that is familial. The first place that love is supposed to be shown by Christians is to other disciples of Jesus. We love and take care of one another with a love a person shares with a family member. In Acts 2 this type of love was on full display as the community of faith took care of the needs that existed among themselves. The inward love that was displayed in the people who found faith in Jesus was the driving force of evangelism as their love for one another became increasingly attractive to those watching them.

But that type of brotherly love is motivated by another, higher love. Peter wraps up his list of characteristics we need to build into our lives of faith the same way Paul often does- he says we need love. This love Peter and Paul describe is a

separate Greek word than we talked about last week, this love is an agape love.

**Agape is the highest expression of love. This is a love that originates with God and is the most self-sacrificing love there is.**

The word agape was hardly ever spoken in Greek-speaking societies, but in the New Testament the word appears 320 times! Those who wrote the NT pointed to a love from God as the only thing that would truly change a person's life.

We have theological definitions for agape love. Let me give you two ways to define agape:

**Agape: The active love of God for His Son and His people and the active love God's people are to have for God, each other and even their enemies.**  
(The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance)

Agape is active love that originates from God and is displayed to His Son, Jesus, and to those of us who are disciples of Jesus. In return we are to show that love back to God, to one another and even to our enemies!

Here's another definition from Ken Boa of the Greek term agape:

**Agape is the steady intention of the will to another's highest good- it is an ongoing benevolence for another. - Ken Boa**

The love God has for us is a love of His will- it's a covenantal love and it's intent is for the good, or benevolence, of others- namely those who place their faith in Christ for salvation from sin.

It's great to have some definitions of a term like agape; we live in a society that loves terms and definitions. But the disciples didn't have dictionaries and theology text books and Google to help them define God's agape love for His people. We don't actually learn what agape means from text books or dictionaries, we learn, like the disciples did, by looking at the life and teaching of Jesus! Jesus came to be the full revelation of God to the world. So when the disciples wanted to convey what agape love looked like, they pointed to Jesus.

The Pharisees once asked Jesus to share His opinion on what the greatest command was. The goal was to trap Jesus into saying something that would discredit Him. But look at His answer:

**:: Matthew 22:37-40**

**37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'**

**38 This is the first and greatest commandment.**

Jesus pulls this straight from Deuteronomy 6- it was the primary teaching of the Jewish people known as the Shema. So, Jesus has scored some points because

He hits the command all the religious lawmakers would have pointed to as well. But Jesus wasn't done. Look at verse 39:

**39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'  
40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."**

Jesus saw these two commands as being so deeply connected that you can't do one without the other. You can't love God and not love other people. Likewise, you can't show a proper love for other people in a God-honoring way without having a deep, abiding love for God.

John picks up on this idea in his Epistle and shows us how to be like Jesus in both our thoughts and actions.

**:: 1 John 4:7-21**

**7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.**

**8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.**

**9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.**

**10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

**11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

**12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.**

**13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.**

**14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.**

**15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.**

**16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.**

**17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.**

**18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.**

**19 We love because he first loved us.**

**20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.**

**21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.**

I love what John says in verse 17: "This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like

Jesus.”

What was Jesus like? Jesus loved everyone. He broke societal norms to hang out with the people no one else would associate with. Jesus showed grace and mercy instead of judgment and condemnation. He valued people over laws. Jesus was seen as a rebel and a threat to the religious establishment for that very reason. In fact, on multiple occasions the religious leaders challenged Jesus about why he behaved like He did, hanging out with “sinners,” and even eating with them. So, Jesus tells them three stories to demonstrate what God’s love is like.

I’m going to give you 4 statements that we will see play out in these stories demonstrating God’s agape:

**God’s love is demonstrated in Jesus.**

- 1. It’s a reckless love that holds nothing back.**
- 2. It is a totally undeserved love.**
- 3. It’s a generous love given for people who couldn’t pay it back.**

In Luke 15 we see Jesus tell three stories that demonstrate what the love of God is like.

In the first story a man with 100 sheep notices that one is missing. He leaves the 99 to after the one lost sheep. We aren’t told that he leaves someone in charge of the 99; we aren’t told they are safely put in the gates before he goes looking for the lost sheep- we just know he leaves the entire flock to go after one lost one. That’s a reckless sort of love that we have a hard time identifying with. It seems crazy! Until you realize that you are the lost sheep and Jesus left everything to come and demonstrate God’s love by coming for you. Jesus held nothing back to come seek you out when you were far away from Him so you could be brought back into safety under His watch care.

The second story Jesus tells is about a woman who has 10 coins and one gets lost in her house. She tears the place apart looking for that one coin. Have you ever lost something small like that? My wife lost one of her Bluetooth headphones the other day. She looked all over the house for it multiple times. We scoured that place looking in every conceivable area she might have been while wearing the ear piece. Then in a moment of genius she had a thought and ran over to the trash can. She lifted the lid and dug around a little bit and sure enough, among the trash was her Bluetooth! She had it in her hand with some other things when she was throwing trash away and it got tossed as well. This woman in Jesus’ story lost a coin and swept the entire house, moving furniture, exploring nooks and crannies, looking under everything until she finally found it. And then do you know what she did? She threw a party! She invited her friends and neighbors over and fed everyone and probably spent more on the celebration than the coin was worth! In telling this story Jesus was giving us the reason he hung out with the low lives of society and ate meals with sinners- because heaven rejoices over one sinner coming to faith. If just one person far

from God is found, it's worth it!

This is why we do things like "Who's Your One" and Operation Christmas Child. We are doing everything possible to make sure every man, woman and child can hear the gospel and have a chance to respond to Jesus by repenting of their sin and turning to Him as their Savior.

The final story Jesus tells is about a man who has two sons. The younger son comes to his Dad and asks for his inheritance. It's a slap in the face because you don't get your inheritance until your parents die. The boy is essentially saying, "You're dead to me- give me my money so I can leave." The Dad gives his son the money and the boy goes off on his own. He moves off the farm and goes to the city. He embraces the life of the city and parties it up every night. He squandered the money and spent everything he had. A famine hit the land and the boy couldn't find food, so he found work on a farm feeding pigs. Finally he got so hungry that the slop he was feeding the pigs started looking good and he wanted some, but no one would let him eat the food meant for the pigs. When he came to his senses, the boy realized that his father's servants ate better than he did. He devised a plan to go home and beg his dad's forgiveness and offer to work as a servant in the fields. What he didn't know is that his Dad had been longing for him to come home and watched every day for his son to return. When the boy was still a long way off his Dad spotted him and ran to greet his son. The boy apologized and asked for a job in the fields. But his Dad responded differently than he could have ever imagined: he put a ring on his finger, gave him his best robe, put sandals on his feet and had the prized calf killed in order to host a celebration feast for his son!

The son experienced a love from his father that he didn't deserve and could never repay. God is like that with us. In Romans Paul wrote about the love God has for people who don't deserve it and can't earn His love.

**:: Romans 5:6-8**

**6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.**

**7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.**

**8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Agape love is God's covenantal love for us, not because we deserve it or earned it, but because He chose to give it. When we receive God's love we learn to return it. We demonstrate the change God's love has made in our lives by the way we love God in return and by the way we love others- not only those in the family of God, but also those who are far from God, people we may not agree with ideologically or politically, people we may see as enemies or those who drive us crazy (you know the parent you avoid at your kid's games or school functions or the family member you avoid at all costs during the holidays!). When God's

love takes hold of us it changes not only how we see God, but also how we see people who have been created in His image.

2 Questions to close:

1. Do you know the extent of the love that God has for you? Have you embraced the fact that God loves you and His love was demonstrated for you in it's greatest measure through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?
2. Who do you need to show God's love to? This week you will have opportunities to love like Jesus. Are you going to take them? Showing love to someone like Jesus showed love to you may change their entire life. Ask God to open your eyes throughout this week to show you who needs to experience His love through you.