

A Scriptural Response to Homosexuality

Lesson 4: God-Defined Love (Part 1)

INTRODUCTION Brainstorm: What is love?

The Difficulty of Defining Love

As our introduction demonstrated, for English speakers part of our difficulty of defining and discussing love is that our language lumps together so many feelings, relationships, and actions under the umbrella of “love”. Other languages, however, are much more precise, using multiple terms to denote the kind of love (or the relationship/sphere/context in which that love occurs). Since we are using the Scriptures as our guide, we will spend the next two lessons considering the different terms, descriptions, and expressions of God-defined love found therein. Our focus for this lesson will be on God’s love amazing love for us and how his love informs and transforms our own.

Agape (ἀγάπη)

- The Greek Definition: charity, self-less/self-sacrificing love, love that is solely concerned for its object, a love that gods and humans can have

1.) Why must God be ours by faith for us to begin to grasp what real love is?

1 John 4:16 God is love. (Ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν)

Exodus 34:6-7a He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

1 John 4:7-8 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Genesis 6:5 Every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

2.) What is the highest manifestation of God's love by which we come face to face with who he is?

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

1 John 4:9-10 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. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Colossians 2:9 In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

Ephesians 3:17-19 I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

3.) What are the qualities of this love of God that knows no equal?

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son."

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Ephesians 1:4 [God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

Jeremiah 31:3a "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, 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. Love never fails.

Luke 15:22-24 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him [the repentant prodigal son]. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring

the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Luke 7:47-48 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

4.) Whom does God love this way?

John 3:16 "God so loved the world..."

1 John 2:2 [Jesus Christ] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Ephesians 5:25 Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Romans 1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.

Zechariah 2:8 Whoever touches you [Zion] touches the apple of his eye.

John 19:26 Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby.

Galatians 2:20 The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Mark 10:21-22 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

5.) As recipients of God's free and personalized love in Jesus, how does that transform our lives and supersede and inform all our other loves?

1 John 4:15-16 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

John 15:12 "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:11-12 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

1 John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

Matthew 5:44 "I tell you: Love your enemies."

Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

CONCLUSION