

Learning to Love Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 16, 2020

Main Theme – A teaching on the subject of love—today we'll offer a biblical example of AGAPE.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Special Events**
 - Church Potluck – Sunday, February 23, Following the Service
 - Women's Ministry – Tuesday, March 10, from 6:30–8pm
 - Men's Mtng. – Saturday, March 14, from 9–10am

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

2 Corinthians 9:6–8 (NIV)

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH**
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Main Theme – A teaching on the subject of love—today we'll offer a biblical example of AGAPE.

INTRODUCTIONS

As always it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these moments of corporate worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today. Please have your Bible at the ready (i.e., Luke 10) and be prepared to take some notes.

KEY – As always, let us heed the following admonition from Scripture...

James 1:22 (NIV)

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

FYI – Last Sunday morning we established that the English word 'LOVE' is an UMBRELLA term. i.e., We use this term to express a wide array of different sentiments and meanings. Allow me to illustrate...

e.g., I love my mom; I love my children; I love my wife; I love my friends; I love my dog; I love that movie; I love Doritos; I love guitars; I love the Patriots; I love my church; I love taking naps on Sunday afternoons; I love the Lord, etc.

NOTE 1 – Clearly, I DON'T love the Lord in the same way that I love Dorito's, yet I use the SAME word in both cases! In our language we use this one word to convey many things, and we discern the meaning of the word based upon CONTEXT, etc.

NOTE 2 – But the languages of the ancients (sp. Greek) functioned QUITE differently. Whereas we might use ONE word to express a variety of meanings, Greek (i.e., the language of the NT texts) utilized MULTIPLE words with extremely precise meanings—words that are worthy of careful study/examination!

KEY – Last Sunday we analyzed the FOUR Greek words for love. Let's RECAP quickly (**SLIDE**)...

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

1) EROS – Romantic Love – the Love of Attraction

- (+) Eros is a VITAL type of love in bringing couples together and propagating the human species
- (-) Eros is limited in that it is CONDITIONAL (founded upon the perceived beauty of the object)
- (-) Eros is limited in that it is predicated upon SELF (how the object can fulfill desires/craving)

2) STORGE – Familial Love – the Love Shared Amongst Kin

- (+) Storge is a VITAL type of love in that it BINDS/HOLDS the family unit together
- (+) Storge is inherently UNCONDITIONAL and SELFLESS by nature WITHIN the family unit
- (-) Storge is limited in that it is CONDITIONAL (dissipates QUICKLY beyond the nuclear family)

3) PHILIA – Brotherly Love – Love of Close Friends & a General Concern for Humanity

- (+) Philia is a vital type of love in that it helps us to form bonds BEYOND the FAMILY UNIT
 - (-) Philia is limited in that it is CONDITIONAL (contingent upon how your love is reciprocated)
 - (-) Philia is limited in that it is predicated upon SELF (we bond with those who meet our needs)
- (+) Philia is a vital type of love in that it opens our eyes to the NEEDS around us (sympathy)
- (-) Philia is limited in that it may produce SYMPATHY but not compassion (feeling w/out action)

4) AGAPE – Unconditional & Selfless Love (Divine Love)

KEY – This form of love has NO limitation of any kind. it is ENTIRELY positive and the highest possible order of love in both heaven and on earth. Allow me to share a few thoughts along these lines:

NOTE 1 – Agape is truly UNCONDITIONAL. Eros is founded on the beauty of the object; Storge is limited by familial connection; Philia hinges upon reciprocity. Agape is love for the unlovely; the unlovable; the stranger; the enemy; the vile; the outcast; and for those who would ultimately reject its offer!

NOTE 2 – Agape is truly SELFLESS/SELF-SACRIFICING. Whereas Eros and Philia focus on what you might GET from person (e.g., sexual gratification, the meeting of a social need, etc.), agape is focused on what you can GIVE with no consideration of return. Whereas Philia may produce SYMPATHY without action, Agape produces COMPASSION (i.e., love in action).

KEY – This is the kind of love that GOD demonstrates CONTINUALLY and PERFECTLY...

John 3:16

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.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

KEY – This is also the type of love He has called/commanded US to pursue!

John 13:34–35

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Matthew 5:43–48

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 4

Of course, much of the previous teaching was rather TEXTBOOK. i.e., We took the time to present and define concepts related to love (detailing the supremacy of AGAPE in kind). However, sometimes the BEST way to understand a concept is NOT just to review definitions, etc.—but to examine an ILLUSTRATION of that concept in action.

KEY 1 – I learn BEST when I can reflect upon an example that embodies a concept...

KEY 2 – I love that Scripture does NOT just provide us with lists of key words, definitions and theological statements. Rather, it ABOUND with vivid STORIES that embody key concepts, truths, and theological principles! For instance...

- Scripture does NOT just offer a definition of FAITH—we see faith in the story of Abraham
- Scripture does NOT just offer a definition of CONFIDENCE—we see it in David v. Goliath
- Scripture does NOT simply detail the POWER of God—it demonstrates it in the Exodus
- Scripture does NOT simply express God’s SOVEREIGNTY—it displays it in Joseph’s account
- Scripture does NOT simply offer a definition of REPENTANCE—we see it in the Prodigal Son

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 5

KEY – Every concept found in the Bible has CORRESPONDING stories/illustrations for review. In essence—the Word of God does NOT just TELL...it SHOWS! This is certainly true of AGAPE love. Scripture does NOT just provide a definition of AGAPE—it offers illustrations of this love that we can MEDITATE UPON and MIMIC.

I want to take the remainder of our time this morning to consider an EXAMPLE of AGAPE love...

i.e., The Parable of the GOOD SAMARITAN (cf. Luke 10).

KEY – As we read through the story, I want you to look for the CHARACTERISTICS of AGAPE...

- Agape is NOT contingent upon beauty—it extends to the unlovely, the broken and outcast
- Agape is NOT contingent upon reciprocity—it loves without condition or thought of return
- Agape is NOT contingent upon relationship—it extends to those beyond family/friendship
- Agape does NOT produce sympathy but compassion (love that motivates selfless action)
- Agape does NOT focus upon what one can get—the focus is always on what it can give

TO THE WORD – LUKE 10

Luke 10:25–37

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

27 He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

UNPACKING THE STORY – THE SETTING

KEY – Let’s UNPACK this story a bit!

Jesus begins His story by providing the SETTING/CONTEXT in which the incident occurred...

Luke 10:30a

30 . . . “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho” . . .

NOTE – This is a significant (yet easy to overlook) PIECE of the story! Consider the following...

QUOTE – The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends approximately 3,000 feet in about 17 miles. It was a dangerous road to travel. Being rocky, steep, winding, and desolate, it provided many places for robbers to hide as they preyed upon innocent travelers.

KEY – Thus, the man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was in dangerous territory (take note).

UNPACKING THE STORY – THE MAN

The story also begins by introducing us to the MAN who was traveling...

Luke 10:30a

30 . . . “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho” . . .

NOTE – It says NOTHING about his race or religious status (though he was most likely a Jew). It says NOTHING of why he was in Jerusalem or heading to Jericho. It says NOTHING of his background, socio-economic status, age, political leanings, etc.

KEY – In every way he is left a faceless and nameless character—i.e., a character who could be ANYBODY/EVERYBODY! All that we know for CERTAIN is that he was making the dangerous trek from Jerusalem to Jericho.

UNPACKING THE STORY – THE ROBBERS

Of course, the Lord quickly introduces NEW characters and the action begins...

Luke 10:30

30 . . . “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.”

Q. Do you think these men provide for us a shining example of AGAPE love? NO!

Q. Does their example provide an illustration of unconditional & selfless love? NO!

NOTE 1 – Christ portrays these robbers as barbaric VILLAINS that lived by the spoils they wrongfully acquired from others. Look at the manner in which they treated this poor traveler! i.e., These robbers...

- ATTACKED him without reason or provocation
- STRIPPED him of his possessions and his clothing
- They BEAT the man/deliberately left him for dead

NOTE 2 – Sadly the world is FULL of such people—i.e., people who function contrary to AGAPE.

But these are NOT the only characters introduced by the Lord...

UNPACKING THE STORY – THE PRIEST & THE LEVITE PT. 1

Jesus next introduces TWO NEW figures into the account (cf. v. 31–32)...

Luke 10:31–32

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

NOTE 1 – Jericho was a city of PRIESTS and LEVITES (thousands lived in that ancient city). The two mentioned herein were most likely RETURNING from their Temple duties in Jerusalem (capital) to their respective homes in Jericho. i.e., They were going down the SAME road as the wounded man.

NOTE 2 – A PRIEST was a worker in the Temple of God. They were the religious elite of their time who worked to TEACH the people and REPRESENT them before God (through the offering of biblically ordained sacrifices, etc.). LEVITES assisted the priests in the Temple precincts.

In every way these were men who SHOULD have been friends/caregivers to the wounded man!

- They were fellow Jews (presumptively like the ‘wounded’ man)
- They were men of faith/religion (supposed to be men of God)
- They were men of public character, notoriety, and situation
- They were figures who knew the Word re: love/obligation

KEY – Their religious offices OBLIGED them to tenderness and compassion!

Q. But what did they do? They bypassed the man and continued on their way!

Q. Do you think these men provide for us a shining example of AGAPE love? NO!

Q. Does their example provide an illustration of unconditional & selfless love? NO!

UNPACKING THE STORY – THE PRIEST & THE LEVITE PT. 2

To the CONTRARY they displayed APATHY and gross INDIFFERENCE.

NOTE – It is interesting to IMAGINE the EXCUSES that went through their heads/hearts...

- This man is already PAST the point of help—I have no need to intervene...
- It's not SAFE lingering here—perhaps the men who did this are still around...
- I have already had a long week of WORK serving the Lord—I want to get home...
- It is not my fault that he got himself into trouble—I have my OWN problems...
- Someone should do something about this road—MAYBE the government...
- The road is busy—I am sure that someone WILL BE ALONG shortly...

Q. Do any of these excuses sound familiar? It's easy to judge them—but we judge ourselves!

UNPACKING THE STORY – THE GOOD SAMARITAN

It is at this point in the story that the Lord introduces the HERO (unlikely) of the parable...

Luke 10:33a

33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was . . .

NOTE – The fact that this man was a Samaritan adds MUCH to the story...

QUOTE – “Jews avoided Samaria and the Samaritan people because there was a long-standing, deep-seated hatred between these people groups. The Samaritans were scorned by the Jews because of their ancestry. The Samaritans were a mixed race, part Jew and part Gentile, that grew out of the Assyrian Captivity of the ten northern tribes in 727 B.C. Rejected by the Jews because they could not prove their genealogy, the Samaritans established their own temple and religious services on Mt. Gerizim (v. the Temple in Jerusalem). This only fanned the fires of prejudice. So intense was their dislike of the Samaritans, the Pharisees prayed that NO Samaritan would be raised in the resurrection!” THAT'S HARSH!

KEY – If ANYONE would walk by and leave the wounded man it WOULD BE the Samaritan! He could have said to himself, “This man is an enemy who would never stop to help me in my time of need!”—proceeding along his merry way. But this is NOT what takes place...

Luke 10:33–35

33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

UNPACKING THE STORY – TAKEAWAYS PT. 1

FYI – Hearing what the Samaritan did for a stranger while the priest and Levite walked on would have HUMILIATED the expert in the Law who asked, “Who is my neighbor?” (v. 29)! As we look to the Samaritan, we see a vivid ILLUSTRATION of AGAPE love!

1) Agape is NOT Concerned about the Attractiveness/Beauty of the Object

It is concerned even for the broken, the unlovely, etc. The Samaritan showed care for a man who was bloodied, beaten, stripped and shamed in every way! There was NOTHING lovely or appealing that would draw someone to him. But the Samaritan was MOVED to affection anyway!

2) Agape is NOT Concerned with How Well the Person Has Treated/Treats You (Reciprocity)

Should the roles have been REVERSED, the average Jew would have quickly bypassed a wounded Samaritan. Such a figure would have been considered LESS than human by a typical Jew! But the Samaritan put this sentiment aside and intervened ANYWAY! This was love for one who would likely NEVER have showed such care in return!

3) Agape is NOT Concerned with How the Object is Related—Beyond Scope of Family/Friends

The Samaritan had no previous dealings with the man. They were STRANGERS! In fact, their respective heritage, ancestry, etc. would have made them ENEMIES. Yet the Samaritan was moved to LOVE anyways!

Luke 10:33 (Emphasis Mine)

33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; **and when he saw him, he took pity on him.**

4) Agape Does NOT produce Sympathy—but Compassion (Love in Action)

Luke 10:33–35

33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

5) Agape Does NOT Consider What it Can Get—Only What it Can GIVE

The Samaritan identified the needs of the stranger and had compassion on him. There were NO logical reasons why he should rearrange his plans and invest in an enemy. But such loves needs no reasons—it GIVES by its very nature!

UNPACKING THE STORY – TAKEAWAYS PT. 2

Jesus' story illustrates AGAPE love for all to see—with astounding BEAUTY and SIMPLICITY.

KEY 1 – But we cannot forget the REASON that Jesus had in telling this story! **Q. What reason?**

Luke 10:36–37 (Emphasis Mine)

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “**Go and do likewise.**”

KEY 2 – Christ told this story to DEMONSTRATE the type of love WE are to SHOW to others! It is our duty and obligation as Christians to MIMIC the type of love that we see in this timeless and timely parable! The phrase “Go and do likewise” indicates that this is NOT optional!

CONCLUSIONS

FYI – To be HONEST...

-I DON'T think that the Lord cares if you can pronounce these words properly...

-I DON'T think that the Lord cares if you forget these terms when you leave today...

KEY – But I DO believe that He CARES about how you live (i.e., the love you show to others)! He cares that your life is CHARACTERIZED by the love shown in this account. Let this parable speak to you and may your eyes/heart be opened to ways that you can manifest this love—i.e., His love!

James 1:22 (Emphasis Mine)

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.**

Luke 10:37b (Emphasis Mine)

37 . . . “**Go and do likewise.**”