

# Learning to Love Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 23, 2020

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**Main Theme** – A teaching on the subject of love—today we will discuss HOW to move to agape.

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## WORSHIP & PRAYER

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Special Events**
  - Church Potluck – TODAY, February 23, Following the Service
  - Women’s Ministry – Tuesday, March 10, from 6:30–8pm
  - Men’s Meeting – 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!

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN’S CHURCH**
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# Learning to Love Pt. 3

**Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 23, 2020**

**Main Theme** – A teaching on the subject of love—today we will discuss HOW to move to agape.

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

**FYI** – Today we bring our teaching series on love to a CONCLUSION. In recent weeks have placed tremendous emphasis on AGAPE love (i.e. a truly mammoth biblical theme). As we have noted as of late...

### 1) Agape Love Is Defined as an Unconditional and Selfless Form of Love

It is NOT conditioned on the beauty or “attractiveness of another. Rather, it is love even for the unlovely, the broken, the outcast, the scorned, the shamed and beyond.

It is NOT founded upon reciprocity. Agape functions whether the object returns love or not. The one practicing agape is not focused on what he or she might get, but upon what they can give.

Agape produces—NOT sympathy, but—compassion. i.e., Being moved so deeply by what you see that you are moved to action.

**NOTE** – Consider that this type of love was quite apparent in the actions of the Good Samaritan.

### 2) Agape is a Divine Love—Being the Love Demonstrated by God

**Q. Did God love you because of your loveliness, desirability or perfection? NO**

**Q. Did God love you because of what you could give to/provide for Him? NO**

**Q. Did God demonstrate sympathy toward us or compassion? Compassion**

#### **John 3:16 (NIV)**

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.

### 3) Agape is the Type of Love We are Commanded to Practice

We are to love the unlovely, the broken, the outcast, the scorned and the shamed.

We are to love regardless of rejection, ill treatment, mistreatment, or persecution.

We are to demonstrate biblical compassion without thought of return/reciprocity.

#### **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.”

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

**KEY** – An honest consideration of these themes ultimately brings us to a place of DECISION...

**A)** We can determine that this call of God/standard is too high and lofty to attain. We can choose to shrink back to our old ways and habits (as dysfunctional as they are), content with where we are at and justifying our decision in kind.

OR

**B)** We can purpose to obey the Lord's call to love at this level, trusting that Father knows best. We can—by the Spirit of God—seek to live according to His ways and teachings (knowing that this decision shall be met with temporary difficulties yet eternal rewards).

**KEY** – There is NO third option available. You will obey God OR you will not!

**NOTE** – It is my ASSUMPTION that it is our desire (individually and corporately) to obey the Lord. If that is the case, we must now wrestle with the following QUESTION (which will solidify the foundation for our discussion this morning)...

**Q. How? How do I/we practically learn to practice agape love?**

**Q. How do I/we rise above our fallen inclinations to love as God does?**

Great questions! I am so glad that you asked—you always ask the best questions! In response, I want to put forth THREE principles that should be of benefit. Though learning to walk in agape love is a lifelong journey, the following points should AID you in the endeavor.

### PT. 1 – RECEIVE

**KEY #1** – If you want to develop in agape love, you must first RECEIVE agape love.

So many Christians are trying to show forth the love of God without first being convinced of His love toward them. Do you know that God loves you? Do you realize His agape love for you? In the end, you can only GIVE out what you have first RECEIVED!

**John 3:16 (NIV)**

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.

**John 3:16 (PJV)**

16 For God so loved me that he gave his one and only Son, that if I would just believe in him, I shall not perish but have eternal life.

**FYI** – It's only as we receive God's love that we are freed from those things that limit our love...

**A)** Our love is limited by RELATIONSHIP. i.e., We love our family and friends, but our love tends to dissipate beyond these nuclear relationships. But once you realize that God loved you when you were a stranger to Him (i.e., a foreigner), how can you not love those who are strangers and foreign to us?

**B)** Our love is limited by RESPONSE. i.e., We love those who love us in return/treat us well. But once you realize that God loved you when you were sinful, hostile and rejecting toward Him, how can you not love those who might mistreat you? And how can we not show mercy to others in light of the great mercy we have received!

**C.)** Our love is limited by the benefits we REAP from others. i.e., We invest love because of what we may well get in return (e.g., social, physical, emotional, material needs, etc.). But what if we saw Christ—and not people—as the one who meets our deepest needs? Would we not be freed to give unto others/invest without the thought of/need for return?

**D)** Our love is limited by the requisite degree of SACRIFICE/COST. We will be helpful to a point, but there seems to always be a limit/line. But once you realize that God sent His Son at great personal cost, how can we not show such care for those so loved by Him?

**KEY** – Receiving God's love is the key to unlocking a true love for others. You cannot and will not walk in agape until you FIRST receive His love for you. And once you experience this, you will no longer say, "How can I love this person?" You will say, "How can I not!"

**Q. Do you believe that He loves you? In your inner being?**

**Q. Do you live knowing that—despite outward circumstance—He loves you?**

**Q. When you hear me say, "God loves you" do you try to find reasons why He does not?**

**FYI** – I echo the prayer of the apostle Paul...

### **Ephesians 3:17b–19**

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

## **PT. 2 – RECIPROCATE**

**KEY #2** – If you want to develop in agape love, you must RECIPROCATE His love.

It is not enough to receive God's love—we must learn to love Him in return. There is a deep truth that we must understand: i.e., we will NEVER have healthy earthly relationships with one another until we have a healthy relationship with Him! So...learning to love Him is critical!

**Q. How are we to love the Lord? A.** Matthew 22:37...

### **Matthew 22:37**

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

**NOTE** – The type of love that we have for Him is NOT some meager, feeble, small or secondary love. It is an abiding love that is characterized by unconditional affection and surrender. It is our highest duty/obligation to love Him—and it is only as we obey this segment of the GC that we are READIED to obey the latter portion...

### **Matthew 22:39**

39 And the second [facet of the GC] is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

**KEY** – We will NEVER be able to love people if we can't first love Him. Consider the following...

**Q.** How can we expect to love and serve people who will frustrate us, disappoint us, wound us, grieve us, betray us, mistreat us, etc., if we cannot effectively love the One who is perfect in all His ways?

**Q.** If we can't love the One who is faithful, kind, generous, etc., what chance do we truly have of loving anyone on this earth?

**KEY 1** – There is no shortcut to this point. You will have to learn to love/prioritize the Lord. In the end, it really is not so hard to love Him. Last I checked He's pretty AMAZING. Taste and see that the Lord is good!

**KEY 2** – Invest time and energy into your relationship with Him! Take the time to praise and worship Him daily. Spend time talking to Him in prayer and let Him speak to you in prayer and through His Word. Invite Him into every facet of your love and watch your heart overflow with affection to the God who made and saved you!

**Q. Do you want to walk in agape love?**

You have to first RECEIVE His love!

You must learn to RECIPROCATE in kind!

## **PT. 3 – RELEASE**

**KEY #3** – Lastly, if you want to develop in agape love, you must choose to RELEASE it unto others. The best way to grow in biblical love is to practice biblical love. Practice truly makes improvement!

**Q. Pastor, how do I show such love to others? What can I practically do?**

### **1 Corinthians 13:4–5 (i.e., Small Portion of an Extended Text on Love)**

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

#### **1) Show Agape to Others by Demonstrating Patience (v. 4a Love is Patient)**

##### **Colossians 3:12**

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

##### **Ephesians 4:2**

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

#### **2) Show Agape to Others by Demonstrating Kindness (v. 4a Love is Kind)**

##### **Galatians 6:10**

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

##### **Luke 6:35**

35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

#### **3) Show Agape to Others by Rejecting a Spirit of Envy (v. 4b Love Does Not Envy)**

**KEY** – You will never love people as God does as long as you're JEALOUS of what they have that you don't! Biblical love requires that we let go of petty jealousies and find contentment with what God has given us (gratitude)...

##### **Hebrews 13:5**

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

**1 Timothy 6:6–10**

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

**4) Show Agape by Rejecting Pride (v. 4b, 5 Love Does Not Boast/Isn't Proud/Not Self-Seeking)**

Love requires humility (selflessness). You will never love others until you can see past yourself!

**Philippians 2:3–4**

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

**5) Show Agape by Showing Honor & Respect to Others (v. 5 Love Does Not Dishonor Others)****Romans 12:10**

10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

**1 Peter 2:17**

17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

**6) Show Agape by Watching Your Temper (v. 5b Love Is Not Easily Angered)**

Proverbs 15:18

18 A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict,  
but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.

**Ecclesiastes 7:9**

9 Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit,  
for anger resides in the lap of fools.

**Ephesians 4:26**

26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

**7) Show Agape by Forgiving Others (v. 5 Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs)****Ephesians 4:32**

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**KEY** – There is more TRAGIC than a loveless Christian. They risk great reward...

**1 Corinthians 13:1–3**

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

**CONCLUSION**

**Q. Do you want to grow in agape love?**

- 1)** Receive the Love of God
- 2)** Reciprocate that Love by Loving Him
- 3)** Release Love to Others by Practicing Love