



Short Course On Love

Researched and Compiled by Don Koehler

Regardless of economics, race or status, people value love and recognize that love will shape what is good and true.

Since our English word love is used so broadly, it is helpful to know the various words for love in the New Testament as written in Greek.

Eros (Ἔρως)

Eros is what most people mean when they announce with a smile, "I'm in love." This type of love covers everything from queasy stomachs and warm fuzzy feelings to strong sensual passion.

There are a couple of interesting characteristics about Eros. First, *Eros is dependent upon* the situation and circumstances. As long as a couple is enjoying a romantic situation, Eros can thrive. But, as soon as hurtful words or actions appear, Eros simply evaporates usually leaving a bit (?) of bitterness behind.

Second, Eros is also held captive to each person's perception. For example, if someone perceives a particular quiet evening dinner with candles to be romantic, Eros will thrive. However, passion becomes squashed for someone whenever he or she interprets the current situation to be undesirable. Eros thus grows strong and then wastes away based upon our perceptions.

Although Eros at times might make us feel like we are on cloud nine, *it can not provide a reliable basis for building a deep and meaningful relationship* since it is so fickle and dependent upon perception and circumstances. Because of such things as accidents, diseases, and the fact that someone can choose to doubt or despise you regardless of your actions, it is clear that we can not determine how others will perceive us nor are we masters of our own circumstances. Note: Eros is exhilarating, but Eros is not a Biblical word.

Stergo (στοργή)

This word means to feel affection, especially the affection between parents and children. It also indicates the affection of a people for the king, or a dog for its master. Note: NT references are compounded or negative.

Philos (φιλία)

This is the love of friendship, best friends, and the fellowship of being with those people you enjoy.

Although Philos is wonderful, it too is not reliable since it is also held captive by the sifting sands of situation as well as by our and other's perceptions and expectations. Unfortunately, we probably all know of a friendship which waned or was severed because of time, distance, harsh words, how someone interpreted another's actions, etc. Note: Philos is used occasionally in the New Testament.

Agape (noun) (ἀγάπη) **Agapeo** (verb) (ἀγαπᾶω)

Unlike the previous three types of love, agape is not limited to being held hostage by its environment and someone's perception. The reason why agape can soar above these is because it is based upon the *commitment of a decision*. It entails the decision to proactively seek someone's well-being. Since it is neither a knee jerk reaction nor just a responsive feeling to how I have been treated, agape is capable of acting in a hostile environment where there are no warm fuzzy feelings.

Agape is a decision to unconditionally proactively seek someone's well-being, asking nothing in return, expecting nothing; a commitment which chooses the risk of possibly being deeply hurt by that someone.

If the proactive nature of agape were not enough, it has the power to rise above its environment; it can also empower passion and friendship! For example, when a spouse chooses to speak and act toward the mate with agape, this creates the loving environment in which Eros and Philo can thrive! Although this spouse might even perceive the other spouse as being unkind or rude, additional problems can be prevented by responding out of agape while it works at nurturing the growth of the other forms of love!

For example, Yeshua's teaching that we should agapeo our enemies is intended to show the boundless nature of the Christian commitment toward seeking another's well-being. Luke 6:35.

The New Testament is full of examples and teachings illustrating the nature of agape as well as training the disciple's heart to be shaped by agape. A few of these teachings which underline the active nature of agape include:

- Knowing that sinful man would kill His Son, but also knowing that without Jesus we were doomed, God loved (agape) us by sending his Son. John 3:16.
- Those who love (agape) Jesus will do what Jesus taught. John 14:15,23.
- If a person has material resources and the love (agape) of God within him, his heart will take care of his brother who is in need. 1 John 3:17.
- Just as Christ through love (agape) acted on behalf of the church, so too the Christian husband is to be motivated by love (agape) to act on behalf of his wife. Ephesians 5:25-29.

Is Agape easy? With God anything is possible. Just ask His help. Once you are in an Agape relationship, the second comes a bit easier, and so on. Just remember, **Agape is a *decision to unconditionally proactively seek someone's well-being.***

Note. We are called to live and love as Yeshua did. Yeshua asked Peter three times, do you love me. Peter answered Yeshua with a weaker version of the word love (*phileo*). The conversation went like this [John 21:15-17 [NAB]]:

When they had finished breakfast, Yeshua said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you agapeo me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I phileo you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you agapeo me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I phileo you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you phileo me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you phileo me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I phileo you." [Yeshua] said to him, "Feed my sheep. ..."

Yeshua accepts what we offer and still commissions us to serve Him. I doubt Peter fully understood what Yeshua wanted, but he was soon to learn. Yeshua used Peter to establish His church.

What about you? We find in 1 John 4:20-21 that we (*agapeo? phileo?*) Him, because he first *agapeo* us. Now he commissions us to spread the message of that love. His *agapeo*! Read Psalm 136 to find His *agapeo* is everlasting and endures forever.

1 Corinthians

Chapter 13

Verses 1-8

If I speak in human and angelic tongues,
but do not have agape,
I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.
If I have the gift of prophecy
and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge;
if I have all faith so as to move mountains,
but do not have agape, I am nothing.
If I give away everything I own,
and if I hand my body over so that I may boast
but do not have agape, I gain nothing.

Agape is patient.

Agape is kind.

Agape is not jealous.

Agape is not pompous.

Agape is not inflated.

It is not rude,

does not seek its own interests,

is not quick-tempered,

does not brood over injury

Agape does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.

Agape bears all things,

believes all things,

hopes all things,

endures all things.

Agape never fails.