

Earl and Sophi had been married for 35 years. One night as they were eating dinner Sophi commented: *“When we were first married, you took the small piece of meat and gave me the larger one. Now, you take the large one and leave the smaller piece for me. I’m afraid you don’t love me anymore.”*

Earl looked at her, smiled and replied: *“Honey, I love you more now than ever. The reason I take the larger piece of meat now isn’t because I love you less. You’re a much better cook now, than you were back then!”*

Love can be such a confusing word, because we use it so much.

- We love our husband or wife, but we also love our pets and certain flavors of Kopp’s custard.
- We love God, but we also love our favorite restaurants, places to shop and songs.
- We love our parents and our kids, but we also love our home.

If love means different things to different people, are we even sure what it means? What better day than Valentine’s Day to learn about love? It’s perfect timing. Love is the 7th and final Christian quality in our series.

Let’s start with a 30-second study on the word LOVE. *Ready?* In English, we only have the one word – LOVE. But in the Greek of the NT, there are 4 different words that describe 4 different types of love.

- There’s *phileo* ... the companionship LOVE between friends.
- There’s *eros* ... the physical LOVE between a husband & wife.
- There’s *storge* ... the family LOVE between a parent and a child.
- There’s *agape* ... the unselfish LOVE of sacrifice. *How’d I do?*

While the first 3 types of love certainly make up a major part of our daily lives, it’s the last one – the unselfish love of sacrifice – or, agape, that’s the most important and the one used in today’s lesson.

Agape is patterned after someone from the Bible who showed unselfish love and made a sacrifice. You know him. You love him. You trust him. You expect to hear all about him when you come here or watch.

- With an unselfish love of sacrifice, and thinking only about you, Jesus came here from heaven above ... at Christmas.
- With an unselfish love of sacrifice, and thinking only about you, Jesus died on the cross to forgive every sin ... on Good Friday.
- With an unselfish love of sacrifice, and thinking only about you, Jesus came back from the dead and announced his rescue plan for sinners a complete and total success ... on Easter Sunday.

It is Jesus and his unselfish love of sacrifice that guides and guards and directs our lives each day.

Most people think of love as feelings ... butterflies in the stomach, blushing cheeks, sweaty palms and some mushy words. The Bible tells us differently. Our reading from 1 Corinthians 13 offered 15 practical examples of what love does and does not do. Agape love is all about actions, not feelings or words.

Agape love is powerful. It’s unique, unlike the other types of love.

- In friendship love ... each looks for mutual support.
- In sexual love ... each looks for mutual enjoyment.
- In the love between a parent and a child ... each looks for mutual affection.

Things are reversed with agape love. God’s motives are completely unselfish. His thoughts are only what is best for the one being loved. It expects nothing in return. God doesn’t love us because of who we are. He loves us because of who he is

You know 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.** That’s what God did for us. While 1 John 3:16:

**Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.**

That's what God wants us to do for others.

**I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another.** The words of John, the Apostle of Love, aren't fuzzy, warm and cute. Tucked into the back of your NT are the two shortest books of the Bible, 2 and 3 John. They're only about 300 words each, but both mini-letters focus on one thing – you guessed it – Love! Since as God's people, you have been on the receiving end of God's love and experienced it first hand; as God's people, you'll turn around and share it. Expressing that kind of love for one another.

John says: **I ask that we love one another.**

Treating others in this way does 5 wonderful things.

- *First of all, it pleases God.* It makes him happy to see his children act that way.
- *2) It gives expression to our faith.* Faith is a living and active faith when it can be seen and touched by those around you. Where better to put that faith on display than in a Christian marriage ... a Christian family ... a Christian home ... a Christian church ... a Christian school?
- *3) It helps us grow in our faith.* Practicing Christian love exercises our faith and makes it stronger.
- *4) It makes other people's lives better.* How much heartache and pain are caused when we don't show love? When love is expressed, not just on February 14th, it's a wonderful thing.
- *5) It sends an unmistakable message - God's power is real and working.* Religious talk can be ignored, but you can't fake a loving group of Christians. That has an appeal to people who are hurting and looking for someone who cares about them.

The concept of love the Bible is teaching goes beyond loving someone as a friend, or loving someone because you're married to them or loving them because they're part of your family. Each of these types of love, all 3, are unpredictable. They can weaken and change suddenly.

I'm going to share some Bible verses with you. See if you can identify the unique qualities of Agape love, the love God has for you.

- Isaiah 54 - *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken.*  
**The Lord's love ..... is unfailing and unchanging.**
- Romans 8 - *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present or the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God.*  
**The Lord's love ..... is separation-proof.**
- Galatians 3 – *He loved me and gave himself up for me.*  
**The Lord's love ..... is unselfish and sacrificial.**
- Romans 9 - *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*  
**The Lord's love ..... is unconditional.**

People often think: "Nobody loves me?" even if they don't come right out and say it. My friends, that's never true. Jesus loves you with the deepest love there is. So much is written today about self-image and self-worth. Realize that a healthy self-image does not begin with how you see yourself ... how attractive, or talented you are, or what you've accomplished, or how many likes you get on your latest post. It begins with how God sees you. The Maker of everyone made you and loves you. That's what gives you value and worth. You are a precious commodity to him. A soul bought and paid for by his Son.

You've been on the receiving end of God's unselfish love of sacrifice. You've experienced it first hand. You have! It required action on his part – first in sending his Son, then in sacrificing him. So now it's your turn. It also requires action on your part – first in sending praise and prayers to his Son, your Savior; then through sacrificial and unselfish acts of love each day, every day to those around you.