

BIBLICAL LOVE - A REAL CHALLENGE!

Love is amazing, astounding and occasionally confounding. Love does crazy things at times. Love makes us a bit crazy at times. But love is often not what we have been taught to believe.

In New Testament times the language of the day was Greek in many places. It is the most detailed and specific language ever spoken by man. The New Testament is written in Greek. The Greek language has four main words for love: *agape*, *phileo*, *storge* and *eros*. *Agape* is a high form of love from one's will that seeks the highest good of another. (It is generally not very emotional.) *Phileo* is the deep and close "brotherly love" which one has for a friend. *Storge* is the family love which we have for family members. *Eros* is the word the Greeks used for sexual love. Unlike English speakers, the Greeks would never use the same word for loving your wife and loving your dog or your golf clubs!

Mature people should strive to overcome our culturally learned ideas of love and seek to be more specific in our understanding and applications of love. Culturally, we think of love as simply that powerful emotional *feeling* that overwhelms us. Culturally, we even use a word for an accident: we "fall" in love. As one man told me, "I fell in love with my wife, but I just fell out of love with her. Emotions do that - on one day and off another.

Biblical love, "agape," seeks the highest good of another. When I agape my wife, I use my will (not my emotions) to seek what is best for her, not myself. When I agape my children, I seek what is best for them, not necessarily what is most comfortable. When I agape my brothers and sisters at church, I seek what is best for them, not necessarily what is soft or easy.

When we love as God prescribed, we help one another become more mature, more genuine, more disciplined, more godly. I Corinthians 13, the "love chapter," beautifully defines much of what true love is and does. Various other verses teach us that love is humble, love helps, love teaches, and love is even so bold as to correct.

Our culture has taught us that love simply approves and supports. While that's often true, it is often not. Genuine love seeks what is best for the other person. I would argue that it is best to help others mature and become strong, vibrant and loving persons themselves. Guidance, encouragement, help and even correction are vital in genuine loving relationships. No wonder God is telling us through Paul's pen,

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage

the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. I Thess. 5:14

Let's all join hands and hearts to help each other find our true potential as loving, growing, helping, maturing hearts.

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