

Agape love



The Greek word *agape* is often translated "love" in the New Testament. How is "agape love" different from other types of love? The essence of agape love is goodwill, benevolence, and willful delight in the object of love. Unlike our English word *love*, *agape* is not used in the New Testament to refer to romantic or [sexual love](#). Nor does it refer to close friendship or [brotherly love](#), for which the Greek word *philia* is used. Agape love involves faithfulness, commitment, and an act of the will. It is distinguished from the other types of love by its lofty moral nature and strong character. Agape love is beautifully described in [1 Corinthians 13](#).

Outside of the New Testament, the word *agape* is used in a variety of contexts, but in the vast majority of instances in the New Testament it carries distinct meaning. *Agape* is almost always used to describe the love that is of and from God, whose very nature is love itself: "God is love" ([1 John 4:8](#)). God does not merely love; He is love itself. Everything God does flows from His love. *Agape* is also used to describe our love for God ([Luke 10:27](#)), a servant's faithful respect to his master ([Matthew 6:24](#)), and a man's attachment to things ([John 3:19](#)).

The type of love that characterizes God is not a sappy, sentimental feeling such as we often hear portrayed. God loves because that is His nature and the expression of His being. He loves the unlovable and the unlovely, not because we deserve to be loved or because of any excellence we possess, but because it is His nature to love and He must be true to His nature.

Agape love is always shown by what it does. God's love is displayed most clearly at the cross. "God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved" ([Ephesians 2:4–5, ESV](#)). We did not deserve such a sacrifice, "but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" ([Romans 5:8](#)). God's agape love is unmerited, gracious, and constantly seeking the benefit of the ones He loves. The Bible says we are the undeserving recipients of His lavish agape love ([1 John 3:1](#)). God's demonstration of agape love led to the sacrifice of the Son of God for those He loves.

We are to love others with agape love, whether they are fellow believers ([John 13:34](#)) or bitter enemies ([Matthew 5:44](#)). Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of sacrifice for the sake of others, even for those who may care nothing at all for us. Agape love as modeled by Christ is not based on a feeling; rather, it is a determined act of the will, a joyful resolve to put the welfare of others above our own.

Agape love does not come naturally to us. Because of our fallen nature, we are incapable of producing such a love. If we are to love as God loves, that love—that *agape*—can only come from its Source. This is the love that "has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" when we became His children ([Romans 5:5](#); cf. [Galatians 5:22](#)). "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" ([1 John 3:16](#)). Because of God's love toward us, we are able to love one another.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 The Way of Love

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** And if I have ^aprophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, ^bso as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. **3** ^cIf I give away all I have, and ^dif I deliver up my body to be burned, ^ebut have not love, I gain nothing.

4 ^eLove suffers long and ^fkind; love ^gdoes not envy or boast; it ^his not arrogant **5** or rude. It ⁱdoes not insist on its own way; it ^jis not irritable or resentful;^k **6** it ^kdoes not rejoice at wrongdoing, but ^lrejoices with the truth. **7** ^mLove bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, ^eendures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. **9** For ⁿwe know in part and we prophesy in part, **10** but ^owhen the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. **11** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. **12** For ^pnow we see in a mirror dimly, but ^qthen face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as ^rI have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

(I John 4:7-21) I John 4:16 And we have known and believed in the LOVE that God has for us. God is LOVE and he who abides in LOVE abides in God and God in him.

John 3:16 For God so LOVED the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life...Amen