

Messenger of Truth

"Holding forth the Word of Life" (Phil. 2:16)

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Love

"Love is the door to eternity." – Thomas Merton

"Life! What art thou without love?" – E. Moore"

"The giving of love is an education in itself." – Eleanor Roosevelt

"To love is to receive a glimpse of heaven." – Karen Sunde

"The first duty of love is to listen." – Paul Tillich

Love is a fascinating study in light of Scripture. In America we don't understand that the term is very general. In the *koine* Greek of the first century, there was more than one word that was used to help one understand the type of love under consideration.

There was *phileo* (*philia*, noun form) which referred to the love between friends and brothers and sisters in Christ. There was *storge* which was a love one had for family. (Even though it is not used in Scripture, the concept is readily seen.) There was *eros* which embraced sexual love. And there was *agape* which was the highest form of love; a self-sacrificing and deep love.

When one considers the specific nature of the Greek words, you can readily see why people of other languages and countries are confused by our broad reference of love. In their minds, how could one have the same love for family that he does for God? How could one speak of love in a sensual sense and have the same feeling toward God?

Obviously the goal of every child of God is to develop *agape* love. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). And Paul adds that beautiful note: "But God demonstrates (commends) His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

And what of God Himself? "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

One of the most amazing conversations in the New Testament, was that between Jesus and Peter in John 21. The Lord asked Peter if he loved (*agape*) Him. Peter responded saying that he loved (*phileo*) Him. Notice, Jesus asked if Peter had that deep and abiding love for Him like that of God, and Peter responded that he loved Him like a brother. It wasn't until the third time that Jesus used Peter's term which caused Peter to be sorrowful. (It is unfortunate that our translations do not bring out the true conversation of that passage.)

May we all strive for that *agape* love.