



**Sunday December 13, 2020**  
**GROW IN AGAPE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This sermon is more from a practical point of view. A sermon on love is simple and that which impacts us in our here and now in the way we see God and others as well as into eternity when the only thing that will last and remain is love.

From a human perspective, we experience love as a feeling. We tend to fall in love, we tend to fall out of love. We describe the affection we have for our spouses, our children, our vocations, our interests, our favourite food in the same way we describe when we say we love God. The emotional connection we feel with people and things is what we call love, but is this the God kind of love? The love that is described in Scripture here is so different from what we experience in the world.

The NT originally written in Greek helps us to understand the word 'Love' better. There are 4 unique forms of love found in scripture- Storge, Philia, Eros, and Agape'. Storge- family love, Philia is brotherly love Eros is romantic love between a man and a woman. Agape' is the kind of love that the Bible refers to as the love God has for us. These words are used in scripture along with "Hesed" that is used in the OT to describe God's loving kindness. To the Greeks, proper agape meant a general empathy or lovingkindness for all people. Though in the Bible, Christians are indeed expected to care for all in the name of Christ, Christianity took this a step further. Biblical writers used God as the standard for true agape.

God's love is described as the Greek word '*agape*' (noun form) and '*agapao*' (verb form), which means unconditional love, preferential love that is chosen and acted out by the will. It is not love based on the goodness of the one you are giving your love to (recipient), or upon natural affinity or emotion. It is based on action and expresses itself in action- it is defined by **action and not feeling**. It isn't born just out of emotions, feelings, familiarity, or attraction, but from the will and as a choice.

**Matthew 5:44** commands us to love our enemies- if God was telling us to have a good feeling towards our enemies, it is difficult to evoke that feeling. It is based on obedient action.

**1 John 3: 16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us**

Jesus laid His life for us- He did it out of agape love defined by an action. Agape love is benevolent love that always seeks the good of the beloved and is based on obedience.

Agape' was that which caused God to sacrifice Jesus for us, and it was agape' that made Jesus give His life for us, and agape' should cause believers to love God and one another. We are taught to love like the Trinity loved: God the Father showed love by sending His Son. God the Son showed love by sacrificing His life, and God the Holy Spirit shows love by pouring out God's love in our hearts.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON A CHRISTIAN MUST LEARN IS HOW TO LOVE AS CHRIST LOVED US.**

**Does God love each of His creation?**

God's love is available for all of us. John 3:16

God loves all of his creation, and this fallen cosmos. God shows His mercy and kindness to all of His Creation. He loves all not because of what we have done but because of His Character of love



## **Do all people manifest Agape love?**

### **1 John 4:7, 8**

**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.**

The love used in this Scripture that is Agape love and not a love that is contained in human nature (Phileo love/ Eros love). It's a love that is only fully expressed in God's nature. Our natures by default are sinful (Rom. 3:23; 6:1-6). There is no part in us that is not marred by sin, including the way we feel and act towards other people. Every part of us needs to be redeemed, even our affections. Our carnal selves are not capable of fulfilling God's commands, which includes loving Him with all that we are.

The world is capable of brotherly love and sensual love, but only those who believe in Christ are capable of Christ-like love, because only Christ lives in us.

When people make their choice of accepting Jesus as their personal Saviour, the love of God is poured out into their hearts. When we are born of God and are in a relationship with Him, the love of God (Notice the kind of love that is poured out into our hearts is the agape kind of love) is what we operate in as we love one another.

**Romans 5:5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

A person cannot love God adequately without being born again. Nor can a person truly love others apart from God's love. Those who demonstrate godly love prove that they are saved.

### **So does God pour out this agape kind of love to all those who believe in Him?**

The answer is yes because when believers exercise their faith in God's Son, they are saved. God has a unique relationship with those who believe in Him in that we only receive forgiveness based on God's eternal grace. The unconditional, merciful love God is poured out on us when we enter a covenant love is conditional through Jesus Christ as Savior.

### **How is this agape love poured out on us?**

The love that is poured out in our hearts is not conclusively the work of man, but the work of God. It is supernatural. It is not finally in our power. It is not the product of mere circumstances. It is not owing to a good family of origin. It is owing to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes it happen. It's his work. This is supernatural because before we knew Christ we were dead in our sin and do not how to love the agape kind of love. We have been selfish and dead in our love. We learn to love because He first loved us.

### **1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.**

As believers we are also known by this love- as Jesus said in

### **John 13:35**

**By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

Those of us who follow Christ should be known by the way we love



**Paul also said in Romans 13: 10 that love is the fulfillment of the law.**

Matthew 22: 37-40 states that the Law stands on 2 commandments: Love the lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself. This means if you love God well and your neighbor well, you would have fulfilled the whole law. You stand not to violate God or man. We are to be model of the fulfilled law to the world around- it is our love that makes this visible. This love is what sets us apart from what is familiar in this world.

Sometimes although this love is to mark us, we find that this love is absent in our lives as believers. What should be singularly setting us apart can sometimes be a hindrance to us. As believers, here's our job description: Scripture shows us that all that we do must be done in love

**1Cor 16:14**

**Let all that you do be done with love**

**What does agape love look like?**

**1 John 4:20**

**If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?**

The agape love that God puts in our hearts has to translate itself into action and only then are we truly manifesting the love God puts in our hearts. This happens in the way it is manifested to others who are around us.

**John 13. 34**

**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**

Those of us who follow Christ should be known by the way we love

The description of this agape love is seen in the well known love chapter that was written by Paul to the Corinthian church and appears bang in the middle of his letter bringing perspective to the way the church lived out their Christian ministry.

As we go through the list, we see that that love is described by action words and not feelings or concepts. They are verbs- and shows us how it acts. Paul does not write about how love feels but he is showing how love is seen in its doing, Agape love is defined not by feeling but by action.

**1Corinthians 13: 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;**

**13: 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;**

**13:6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;**

**13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

Here are characterized 15 distinguishing marks of genuine love, we shall for this sermon club them to 7 for greater use and practicality.

1. **PATIENT LOVE:** The word specifically here means *"to bear patiently with other people's faults and offenses"*- and not the word used when you say to be patient in pain, experiences or in



affliction. It is the kind of patience that refuses to get angry, retaliate, seek vengeance, does not become hostile. When you are patient you are slow to anger, will endure personal wrongs without retaliating bear with other's imperfections and differences. Patient love is never a weakness.

Patience has an element of endurance. Some versions say 'long tempered' or 'suffers long'. This love gives you the capacity to put up with difficult people and hard situations. Difficult people and hard situations are part of our lives.

**Growing in Agape will give you the resilience to live in a difficult world.**

Is a friend or worker treating you badly? Maybe it's a call to take their past circumstances into account as often past wounds often translate into poor behavior. Is your family member's response to you out of the ordinary, show mercy by patiently asking if they are alright. Is an elderly person in your home or neighborhood being too demanding, sit back and think of their life stage and offer to help.

2. **LAVISH LOVE:** Love is kind- it takes on the meaning to be generous or to act benevolent and to showing oneself useful. It is not just to have a friendly disposition but it is that even though one is injured/mistreated or hurt, kindness is extended. It is not a battle of getting your rights but a battle to see how useful you can be to others even when those offend you. Love practices acts of kindness to others – simple, loving acts of kindness. It is not only being generous to how you regard others but also generous about what the other is doing which brings about the next characteristic.

Love doesn't envy/jealous. In life, there will always be someone doing something better than you. There's always going to be competition- how do we respond when someone else is doing it better? How do we react when we see someone promoted or prospering- do we rejoice or immediately slump down to wonder why that didn't happen to you? Jealousy eats away at the soul. Eg. The promotions, the position, the possessions others may receive.

**James 3:14 – 16**

**But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your hearts, don't brag about being wise. That is the worst kind of lie. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and motivated by the Devil. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every kind of evil.**

It is inevitable that if you are jealous you lie and tear down the person you want to replace.

Jealousy also makes you lose control and James says that this jealousy is not a godly virtue but it is earthly, unspiritual and of the devil. Chaos reigns because when you are jealous disorder comes over and causes every kind of evil.

God's love is extravagant, lavish, costly, limitless, boundless, measureless as it says in

**I John 3:1**

**How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!**

**Growing in Agape cultivates a generous spirit that rejoice in the successes of others.**



3. **SELFLESS LOVE:** Love does not parade itself (boast), is not puffed up (proud), does not seek its own (self seeking)

Boasting refers to brag about one's own accomplishments. This is on the other side of being envious or jealous, jealousy wants what someone else has but boasting tries to make others jealous of what we have. Jealousy puts others down but bragging builds ourselves up. Examples, we see is the way the world tells you to get ahead in life- it is by blowing your own horn and playing up your own talents.

Being proud/ puffed up or arrogant- This word comes from the word to be inflated which means to be full of oneself. It is an attitude that cannot be taught. This is not only the matter of an inner attitude but also even in interactions. When the conversation is always about oneself it tends to denigrate others.

Not self seeking – This is a self absorption where one can be so insensitive to the needs of others, because the mind is focused on their own issues and difficulties. Agape love seeks to build others and does not demand recognition and applause. Through your words and thoughts, take a genuine interest in others.

No one is a better example of selfless love than Jesus. Philippians 2 gives the example of Jesus and His selfless love where he made himself nothing even though He was God and emptied himself to take the form of a servant.

**Growing in Agape is to take a genuine interest in the needs and lives of others**

4. **CONSIDERATE LOVE:** Love is not rude: it means not to behave inappropriately or ill mannered. When consideration is shown, it is valuing someone. Practice consideration in the way you listen- wait rather than interpret and interjecting another's conversation. Practice consideration in the way you speak about someone else, in the way you make demands of others. Agape love does not use the love of a friendship to pressure anyone to do something that is contrary to the principles of conscience or faith or the principles of God. Agape love seeks the best for the one loved – not personal gain, pleasure or control that a manipulative spirit is designed to achieve.

**Growing in Agape is to value others by showing grace.**

5. **LOVE RESTRAINTS EVIL** - not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs

It is to mean one is not easily provoked or quick to be offended, not easily irritated or touchy. Eg, Disappointment in marriages, unmet expectations of parents towards their children, workers show quick temper when not given consideration. Love helps you exercise restraint in the frustration that you feel and helps you to keep the poise when you are provoked. Sometimes, we may have legitimate reasons for our anger but that needs to be expressed in love and without sin.

No record of wrongs- It means that love thinks no evil and it wont keep the record of unkindness with the intent of getting even some other time. It chooses not to hold bitter grudges or allow resentment against others, even when the wrong done against us are real. It is not holding a wrongdoer permanently accountable for some wrong done. Love chooses to dwell on the good and not the wrong. Grow to dwell on what is good because it is selective and chooses to focus only on the rights.



Love keeps no record because it finds its security in the presence and the provision of God. We do not need to protect ourselves when we know that God is in control of the outcome.

**Growing in Agape is to dwell on the good of the other and let go of the wrong.**

6. **LOVE'S DELIGHT:** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. -

We express love when we find no pleasure in the difficulties of other people. It is so much in human nature to take pleasure in other people's sins. Eg. spreading gossip about others' sins/faults.

Controlling the tongue is what James exhorts us to do

When someone has fallen, love thinks about the battle they must have fought before they stumbled- it finds no pleasure in another's difficulty. Love settles in the best- instinctively thinks good. How many times do we presume and assume and misjudge a situation just to know that we have been so fault finding?

Rejoices with the truth- it is honest, does not lie to flatter. Loving people tell the truth because telling the truth build relationships

Eg. Flattery brings an artificial relationship and can be seen through.

Often it is by lies rather than real love that infatuated people attempt to rob the sexual purity of people they are in love with. It is by lies and misbeliefs that people rob, kill, cheat, envy or gossip. It is by the lies of self deception that the wrongdoings of consenting adults hurt none other but themselves.

It is the truth about God, others and ourselves enable us to enjoy the good.

**Growing in Agape is to always take pleasure in the truth**

7. **STEADFAST LOVE:** It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Bears all things- It means to cover and protect like a roof covers a house and protects it from storms. This does not mean that love passively bears all sin but that it never stops caring and offering a place of forgiveness, It doesn't get to the place where it begins despising and condemning the other but cares enough to keep praying and covering the ugliness rather than making sure everybody knows about the sin. It is to take every opportunity to endure the sin, to confront when necessary and to forgive. Eg. Tattling: we teach our children to not tattle against their siblings. Spouse broadcasting the sins of your partner- this is not bearing because love is to cover a multitude of sins. It throws a covering over the sins of others.

Believes all things: love is not suspicious- it believes the best. Not assuming the worst, it is not being cynical. What you believe about others is what sometimes shapes them to a positive, honest and affirming person or a defensive and dishonest person. It is eagerness to believe the best.

Hopes all things: never give up on someone as long as you believe on the grace of God is operating in them. It is optimistic because it keeps hoping. Eg. In men/ women whose trust is lost in their partners. when Christ is involved, there always hope.

Endures all things: Love never gives up and never dies. This love is consistent and not something that gives up.



**Growing in Agape is to be consistent and steadfast in showing love at all times and in all things.**

These characteristics are a norm for every Christian believer and is the Spirit's work. We need to examine ourselves and keep from flattering ourselves of how loving we are.

Conclusion:

**1 Corinthians 13: 8 Love never fails**

**1 Corinthians 13: 13 These three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.**

Paul says that love remains or will last forever (never fails). It assumes that love already exists in the lives of the people who he was writing this letter to. He makes reference in 1 Corinthians 13: 10 that when perfection comes i.e., when Christ comes love will remain.

The conclusion we draw is that if we belong to Christ this love is already present in us. It is not that we have not known his love from afar but when we have put our trust in Him as your Saviour, he forgives your sins, His Spirit resides in you. If the Spirit of God who is love lives within you, this agape love IS in you. The Holy Spirit makes the love of God so abundant in the believer's heart that it overflows (1 John 4:8, 16). He is the divine agent who expresses the love of God to the believer. Ephesians 3: 17 says that when Christ dwells in your heart you will be rooted and grounded in His love.

God's love is permanent- This love of Christ is the only thing that will remain to eternity and your capacity to love others will be a reflection of His love for you. On the day we finally meet Him, all things will pass away- all things, our faith and hope would have reached its completion but we will be enjoying this Agape love in its mature measure. God's love never fails and if you are in Christ, this love is in you.



## LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE



Sunday December 13, 2020

GROW IN AGAPE

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

### Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at [apcwo.org/sermons](http://apcwo.org/sermons). Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

### Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship and a fun activity.

### LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture passages: *1 Corinthians 13: 4-7, 1 John 3: 16, 1 John 4: 7-8, Romans 5:5, John 4:20, John 13:34*

### INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

*1. Seven marks of growing in agape love have been highlighted in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7. In the list given below, examine and discuss where you have found it challenging to love as Christ has loved.*

*Patient love*

*Lavish love*

*Selfless love*

*Considerate love*

*Love restraints evil*

*Love's delight*

*Steadfast love*

*2. The truth is that as a believer when Christ dwells in your heart you are grounded in His love. The Holy Spirit residing in you is the agent of this Agape love. Pray for one another to have the Holy Spirit fill and manifest this supernatural love specially with people or situations where there is a struggle to love.*





### **FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey**

Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

### **ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another**

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

*1, families to be protected and strengthened*

*2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.*

*3, for the BUILD TO IMPACT project - for God's hand to guide us through the land search and acquisition process, and for finances to be more than enough to get this project done.*

Close by thanking God together.



**USEFUL RESOURCES**



Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

**YOUTUBE:** <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

**WEBSITE:** <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

**CHURCH:** <https://apcwo.org>

**FREE SERMONS:** <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

**FREE BOOKS:** <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

**DAILY DEVOTIONALS:** <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

**JESUS CHRIST:** <https://examiningjesus.com>

**BIBLE COLLEGE:** <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

**E-LEARNING:** <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

**WEEKEND SCHOOLS:** <https://apcwo.org/ministries/weekend-schools>

**COUNSELING:** <https://chrysalislife.org>

**MUSIC:** <https://apcmusic.org>

**MINISTERS FELLOWSHIP:** <https://pamfi.org>

**CHURCH APP:** <https://apcwo.org/app>

**CHURCHES:** <https://apcwo.org/ministries/churches>

**WORLD MISSIONS:** <https://apcworldmissions.org>