

The Source of All Love

Key Verse:
***“Beloved, if God so
loved us, we ought
also to love one
another.”***
—I John 4:11

Selected Scripture:
I John 4:7-19

THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS

written in the Greek language, and two different sets of Greek words have been translated as the English word “love” in the *King James Bible*. The Greek word *phileo* describes a love associated with personal attachment, such as the love of family

or friends, given out of a sense of mutual affection. The expression “brotherly love” is a translation of the Greek word *philadelphia*, the noun form of the verb *phileo*.

The Greek words *agape* and *agapao* are the noun and verb forms of a different type of love. *Agape* is an unselfish, sacrificing love, given whether merited or not, and regardless of mutual fondness. It is a godlike love. The Apostle John uses these words frequently. In his three epistles, the word love appears thirty-eight times, and all are translated from *agape* or *agapao*.

In the verses of our lesson, John uses these Greek words to describe God’s love. “Love is of God; . . . God is love.” (I John 4:7,8) Describing how God has exercised his love through Jesus, John continues, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. . . . [He] sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (vss. 9,10, *New International Version*) In John’s gospel, he similarly refers to this great manifestation of God’s love: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

The true Christian will desire to develop an unselfish, sacrificing, love. Such love goes beyond merely a benevolent feeling, or mutual affection, exercised one toward another. Rather, it is a love which impels one to sacrifice self-interest, pleasure, comfort, time, strength, and all that one has, for the blessing of others. This kind of “love [for] one another,” as cited in our Key Verse, requires much heart-searching, self-examination, and is developed over a period of time.

“If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. . . . Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” (I John 4:12,16, *NIV*) God accepts our love for one another as a manifestation of our love for him. Thus, we ask: Do we have a genuine interest and concern for our brethren’s highest spiritual welfare? When we learn of their difficult experiences, do we have sympathy and compassion? Do we pray for them, asking for grace, strength, and for the will of our Heavenly Father to be done on their behalf in all matters? Do we take time to encourage our brethren by sharing Scriptural promises in a note, an email, or by calling them?

Another test of whether we are developing *agape* love is our exercise of it toward all mankind, and having love even for our enemies. (Matt. 5:44,45) Unselfish love will cause us to have sympathy and to show mercy toward them. If our enemies, at some time in the future, are enlightened by the truth of God’s Word and, by his grace, manifest a desire to make amends for their wrongdoing, we will rejoice, if we truly have selfless love for them.

Let us seek to develop this kind of love, remembering that God is its source. If we fail, at times, in manifesting love toward our brethren, to mankind, or even for our enemies, we should not be discouraged. Instead, we should seek the throne of grace for God’s forgiveness, and ask for a greater measure of his spirit of *agape* love.—II Tim. 1:7 ■