

CHRISTIAN AGAPE LOVE ISN'T THAT COMPLICATED!

By David Lee Burris

Simple Trusting Pure Love Listed as an Intellectual Impairment.

A CHILD THAT can't stop hugging people, has no fear of strangers, and loves everyone equally—sounds beautiful, right? – National Geographic Magazine

“Not always. People with Williams syndrome, a rare genetic condition, face problems every bit as challenging as those with autism, from learning difficulties to trouble forming friendships. The syndrome, whose sufferers have a surfeit of oxytocin, aka the love hormone, affects roughly 1 in 10,000 people worldwide, with 30,000 in the U.S. It's sometimes called the opposite of autism, although there are overlaps. People with Williams tend to love and trust everyone, so they run up to strangers and hug them, which obviously, also makes them very vulnerable. It was identified in in the 1960s in New Zealand by John Williams, a cardiologist who noticed a lot of his patients had the heart condition supervalvular aortic synosis. It's very rare except in people who have Williams syndrome.

Williams also noticed that several patients had a similar personality and distinct facial features. Williams sufferers tend to be elfin-looking, which was why the disorder was originally called elfin facies syndrome. They have narrow chins, prominent ears, high cheekbones, and upturned noses. It is caused by a very small genetic deletion, about 26 to 28 missing genes on chromosome 7. There are some serious symptoms, like intellectual disability, heart defects, and gastrointestinal and muscle tone problems. Developmentally, it's similar to Downs syndrome. On average, IQ tends to be around 50. People with Williams don't tend to be good at reading social cues. They don't know when you want to end a conversation or leave.

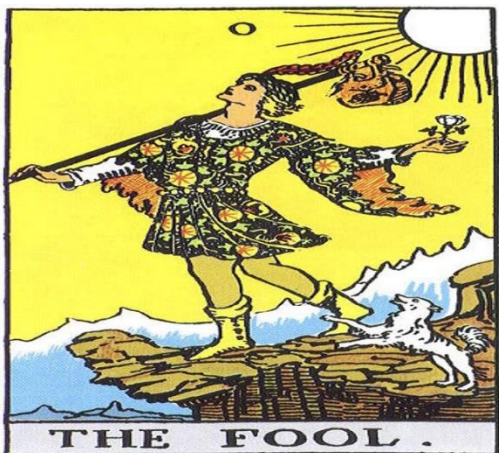
“One of the heart-breaking hazards of raising a kid with Williams is that your child loves you intensely and unconditionally, but he feels the same way about his bus driver.” - Gayle D'Angelo

‘Despite their disadvantages, people with Williams highlight some of humanity’s best features.’ – 2010 Salk Institute Study

A 2010 study showed that people with Williams felt no racial bias, whereas, by the age of three, every other group shows an implicit preference for their own race. It’s amazing to see people with Williams approach everyone with this basic belief in the goodness of the other person.” – *National Geographic Magazine*

Scriptural Warning to The Dangers of Love Over-Simplification:

“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words *make merchandise of you*: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” – 2nd Peter 2: 3 (KJV)



“You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and when it was impressed on them by their original

lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship that crucified sage, and live after his laws...

All this they take quite on trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property. Now an adroit, unscrupulous fellow, who has seen the world, has only to get among these simple souls & his fortune is pretty soon made; *He plays with them.*”
 - Lucian of Samosata, The Death of Peregrinus

The Language of Love: The Ancient Greek Presents Eight Words

Greek word	English word	Description
ἔρως éros	Éros	Passion. Romance. Sexual desire. Irrational. Obsessive. Hard to control.
φιλία	Philia	Deep friendship. Comradely. Loyal. Unselfish. Sharing. Sacrificing.
Λυδός	Ludus	Playful. Flirting. Teasing. Socializing. Superficial.
ἀγάπη, ης, ή	Agápe	Selfless love. Love for everyone. Holding everyone in high regard. Charity. Kindness. Compassion. Empathy.
πρᾶγμα, ατος, τό	Pragma	Longstanding love. Understanding. Compromising. Patience. Tolerance. The love between a happily married couple.
φιλαυτία, φιλαυτία	Philautia	Healthy self-love – (not narcissism).
στοργή	Storge	Affection. Familial love. Love for babies, children and pets.
μανία	Mania	Combination of eros and ludus. Troubled. Jealous. Dependent. Intense. Madness. Obsessive.

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THE 4 GREEK WORDS FOR LOVE

1



STORGE

The Greek word describing family love, the naturally developing affectionate bond between parents, siblings & family members.

Pronounced:
STOR-jay

3



PHILIA

The type of emotional love between good friends, brotherly love, love for humanity & those in need etc.

Pronounced:
FILL-ee-uh

2



EROS

The Greek word for sensual or romantic love.
Pronounced: AIR-ohs

4



AGAPE

The highest of the four types of love as it is the divine love that comes from God. As God is love itself, it means Agape love is perfect, unconditional & a pure love.

Pronounced:
Uh-GAH-pay

Serious Bible Students Need to Distinguish “Philia” From *Agape*

Philia

Philia is friendship love. This word is used in the Bible. As C. S. Lewis wrote in his book, *The Four Loves*, ‘To the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves.’ *Philia* occurs from bonding over similar interests.

Whereas lovers are both preoccupied with each other, friends are both preoccupied with the same things. Friends, of course, care about one another, but it is similar interests that attract them to one another. ‘Philia’ is the opposite of ‘phobia,’ literally meaning that those experiencing *philia* are drawn to one another.

Philia is often overlooked in modern culture, but it is exhorted in the Bible. In [Romans 12:10](#), Paul urges the believers to be devoted to one another in brotherly *philia*. *Philia* can be strongly associated with *agape* as well. In [John 15:13](#), Jesus said that there is no greater *agape* than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

Agape

Agape could be defined as charity. However, we often think of charity nowadays as giving away money or things, which doesn’t encompass all of what *agape* is about. *Agape* love is unconcerned with the self and concerned with the greatest good of another. *Agape* isn’t born just out of emotions, feelings, familiarity, or attraction, but from the will and as a choice. *Agape* requires faithfulness, commitment, and sacrifice without expecting anything in return.

This is the type of love the Bible speaks about the most. The New Testament references *agape* over [200 times](#).

What Agape Means in the Bible

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*.

Agape love, in the Bible, is love that comes from God. God's love isn't sentimental; it's part of His character. God loves from an outpouring of who He is. As [1 John 4:8](#) states, 'God is love [*agapos*],' meaning He is the source of *agape* love. His love is undeserved, gracious, and sacrificial.

We are to love God and others with *agape* love. *Agape* is a choice, a deliberate striving for another's highest good, and is demonstrated through action. God set the standard for *agape* love in sending Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners." [Christianity Today Magazine](#)

C. S. Lewis Explains The Central Theme of Love in the Bible:

“So here the likeness, and in that sense nearness, to Himself which God has conferred upon certain creatures and certain states of those creatures is something finished, built in. What is near Him by likeness is never, by that fact alone, going to be any nearer. But nearness of approach is, by definition, increasing nearness. And whereas the likeness is given to us—and can be received with or without thanks, can be used or abused—the approach, however initiated and supported by Grace, is something we must do. Creatures are made in their varying ways images of God without their own collaboration or even consent. It is not so that they become sons of God. And the likeness they receive by sonship is not that of images or portraits. It is in one way more than likeness, for it is unison or unity with God in will; but this is consistent with all the differences we have been considering. Hence, as a better writer has said, our imitation of God in this life— that is, **our willed imitation as distinct from any of the likenesses which He has impressed upon our natures or states— must be an imitation of God incarnate: our model is the Jesus, not only of Calvary, but of the workshop, the roads, the crowds, the clamorous demands and surly oppositions**, the lack of all peace and privacy, the interruptions. For this, so strangely unlike anything we can attribute to the Divine life in itself, is apparently not only like, but is, the Divine life operating under human conditions.” - Lewis, C.S.. *The Four Loves*

Four Great Red Letter New Testament Love Commandments:

“The Scriptures reveal four specific areas in which we are to express outgoing love. Without question, the first and greatest commandment is to *agape* **love God** intensely. “And one of [the Jewish leaders], a doctor of the law, questioned Him, tempting Him, and saying, ‘Master, which commandment is the great commandment in the Law?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment’ ” (Matt. 22:35-38). We express our love for God by keeping the spiritual intent of His commandments with a humble spirit and willing heart as led by the Holy Spirit. The anchor and foundation for consistently doing so is based on our relationship/fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ through daily prayer and Bible study. This is how we are to live before God and worship Him in spirit and truth. “[T]he hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is indeed seeking those who worship Him in this manner. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). But there are three remaining “love commandments,” wherein we are to express love and outgoing concern toward others. The second great “love commandment” is *agape* **love toward neighbor**, as Jesus taught: “And the second one is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:39-40). Jesus also said, “Therefore, everything that you

would have men do to you, so also do to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). The world has it backwards. They consider themselves first, and then maybe their neighbor. In fact, since people don’t really understand the love of God, rarely do they ever love their neighbors as themselves, because loving one’s neighbor is based on loving God first. The third great commandment is to *agape* **love the brethren**. Jesus gave this commandment— which He called a “new commandment”—because it reflects His own personal love for us and His personal love for God the Father. On His last Passover night, He told His disciples: “A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you, that is how you are to love one another. By this shall everyone know that you are My disciples—if you love one another” (John 13:34-35). Christ reiterated this new commandment, emphasizing that it is based on how He and the Father love each other. “If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love. These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:10-12). Later, John again emphasized how we are to love each other: “Beloved, we should love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God because God is love” (I John 4:7-8).

The fourth “love commandment” is without a doubt the most difficult because it runs contrary to human nature. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, *agape* **love your enemies**, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, so that you yourselves may be the children of your Father Who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same thing? And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done that is extraordinary? Do not the tax collectors practice the same thing?” (Matt. 5:43-47). Perhaps the most outstanding example of “love for your enemies” is that God demonstrated this kind of love toward us while we were still sinners and enemies of God. How so? By having Jesus die for us. Jesus took upon Himself our sins, as well as the sins of the whole world, when He was crucified and died on Passover day! “For even when we were without strength, at the appointed time Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, although perhaps someone might have the courage even to die for a good man. But God commends His own love to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, therefore, having been justified now by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His own Son, much more then, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:6-10). The apostle Paul was perhaps the most prominent example of this. As an enemy of the Church, he ruthlessly persecuted the brethren—causing many to be jailed or put to death. Acting under orders from the high priest in Jerusalem, Paul thought he was actually serving God. Paul would always remember this fact about his life and calling: “And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, Who has empowered me, that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent person; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. But the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. But for this reason I was shown mercy in order that in me first Jesus Christ might demonstrate all longsuffering, for an example to those who would afterwards believe on Him unto eternal life” (1st Timothy 1: 12 - 16). If we will truly give diligence to develop the love reflected by these four great “love commandments”—toward God, among the brethren within the Church and toward those of the world around us—we will truly become “lights of the world,” showing forth the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.” – Carl Franklin

Charles Spurgeon's Sermon on Christian Charity Harmonizes:

“Sympathy is especially a Christian's duty. Consider what the Christian is, and you will say that if every other man were selfish he should be disinterested; if there were nowhere else a heart that had sympathy for the needy there should be one found in every Christian breast. The Christian is a king; it becometh not a king to be meanly caring for himself. Was Alexander ever more royal than when his troops were suffering from thirst, and a soldier offered him a bowl full of the precious liquid, he put it aside, and said it was not fitting for a king to drink while his subjects were thirsty, and that he would share their sorrow with them? O ye; whom God has made kings and princes, reign royally over your own selfishness, and act with the honourable liberality which becomes the seed royal of the universe. You are sent into the world to be saviours of others, but how shall you be so if you care only for yourselves? It is yours to be lights, and doth not a light consume itself while it scatters its rays into the thick darkness? Is it not your office and privilege to have it said of you as of your Master— ‘He saved others, himself he cannot save?’

The Christian's sympathy should ever be of the widest character, because he serves a God of infinite love. **When the precious stone of love is thrown by grace into the crystal pool of a renewed heart it stirs the transparent life-floods into ever widening circles of sympathy: the first ring has no very wide circumference; we love our own household; for he that careth not for his own household is worse than a heathen man and a publican: but mark the next concentric ring; we love the**

household of faith ‘We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren:’ look once more, for the ever-widening ring has reached the very limit of the lake, and included *all men in its area*, for ‘supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks are to be made for all men.’

If any man shall think that we are not ‘born for the universe’ and should narrow our souls, I can only say that I have not so learned Christ, and hope never to confine to a few the sympathy which I believe to be meant for mankind. To me, **a follower of Jesus means a friend of man**. A Christian is a philanthropist by profession, and generous by force of grace; wide as the reign of sorrow is the stretch of his love, and where he cannot help he pities still.” – Charles Spurgeon

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace [welfare] you will have peace.” – Jeremiah 29: 5 – 7

Winter, “Seek the Welfare of the City” Excerpt, pgs. 201 - 204

The welfare of the city was seen to be two-fold. It was ‘physical’ and ‘spiritual’, and in the former case it was revolutionary in certain respects. It linked wealthy Christian members of the city into the civic benefaction convention. At the same time it expanded the definition of ‘benefactor’ to encompass all those in the Christian community who had the capacity to meet the needs of others from self-generated resources.

It required all to be doers of good. This involved the renunciation of the client's full-time role in politeia forcing Christians to withdraw from unproductive existence where they were part of the paid retinue of a patron. Unlike the secular trends of the first century with the development of a welfare syndrome favoring those with status and/or wealth, the Christian community was to be discriminating in the distribution of 'benefactions' to its members, 'honoring' only those who were genuinely needy – the godly Christian widows without relatives.

Paul was concerned as an 'association' they lived in a way that was worthy of the gospel. This involved securing concord in their midst to be a gospel witness in politeia where discord could be the rule rather than the exception. To live in a manner worthy of the gospel proscribed its members struggling for 'primacy' in their Christian community (Phil. 1:27ff). It also required them to abandon the use of vexatious litigation in civil actions which was one of the secular means of securing power in any group (1st Cor. 6:1-8) ...

By ancient standards, the 'nature of the politeia' for Christians was commended as something unique. It was not that they were postulating heaven as a 'republic'. Rather, Christian conduct in the politeia of their present cities was seen as a 'selling point' for the Christian message in the apologia to Dioqnetus. It was sufficiently different from that of others to draw attention to its distinguishing and startling characteristics.

FATHERHOOD - BROTHERHOOD - NEIGHBORHOOD

“Three Dimensions of Love” by Wayne Jackson



The week prior to Jesus’ crucifixion, commonly known as the Passion Week, was an emotionally charged period for the Son of God. Tuesday of that week was particularly controversial. Several members of various Jewish sects mounted argumentative assaults against Christ—with no success whatsoever, of course (see Mt. 22:15ff).

In one of these instances, a Pharisee lawyer framed a question which he doubtless believed, if answered, would provide some evidence for an indictment against the teacher from Nazareth.

“Which is the greatest commandment in the law?”

No doubt this legal expert felt this was a formidable question. The Jewish rabbis declared there were no less than 613 laws in the Old Testament. Of these, 248 were positive in thrust, while 365 were negative. They must have mused: “Which one of these would this so-called Messiah choose as the greatest?”

Christ, appealing to Deuteronomy 6:5, responded:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

Jesus declared that this was the great and first commandment of the law. Further, citing Leviticus 19:18, the Lord said there is a second commandment like unto the first:

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:36-40).

These two commandments, in fact, summarize the entire Old Testament.

All Religion Summed Up in Three Dimensions of Love

All human responsibility can be divided into three categories fundamentally.

First, there is man’s **religious responsibility** to God—the duty we owe our Creator because of his nature (Psalm 18:3). God is a being of such wonder. He is worthy of glory and honor (Rev. 4:11). Mankind should willingly express his reverence for God in divinely-prescribed worship (Mt. 4:10). To neglect loving God is to be guilty of the most egregious form of ingratitude.

Second, there is one’s **moral obligation**. This is the responsibility that human beings have to one another because every person bears the image of God and has intrinsic value.

Finally, by implication, this context suggests there is **personal obligation**—the duty that one has to self as a consequence of his own intrinsic worth.

And so the Savior indicated that the sum of man’s earthly service is to: (1) love God, (2) love neighbor, and (3) love self.

The Nature of Love

But what did Christ mean when he suggested that we must exercise love in these dimensions? To answer this question, it will be helpful to consider the meaning of “love,” as that term is employed in the Greek Testament.

There are two common words in the Greek Testament, both of which are rendered “love” in the English translation. First, there is the verb **agapao**; then there is also **phileo**. These terms are the subject of some controversy

among scholars. A few allege that these words have virtually the same meaning and are mostly employed as stylistic variations.

The vast majority of New Testament scholars, however, see a distinction between the terms.

Agapao has been described as the love of the intellect, a disposition that manifests itself in devotion to the object of its interest. By way of contrast, **phileo** is viewed as being a love of “the feelings, instinctive, warm affection” (Green 1907, 377).

Barclay argued that **agapao** is the love of the mind or the will; whereas **phileo** is the love of closeness and affection (1974, 20-21).

Nigel Turner observed that **phileo** has to do with “warm and spontaneous affection,” but **agapao** connotes “a calculated disposition of regard and pious inclination” (1981, 263).

Thayer suggested that **agapao** is grounded in admiration, veneration, and esteem, while **phileo** is prompted by sense and emotion (1958, 653).

And another scholar says that **agapao** “often conveys the idea of showing love by action” (Richardson 1950, 134).

Having noted this, we now observe that **agapao** is the word employed in the passage under consideration. We are to love God, our neighbor, and even ourselves with an **agapao**-type love.

How to Love God

It is less than amazing that so many profess belief in God but don't have the remotest understanding of what that really involves. For some, “God” is but a term used in profanity, or maybe a mere matter of passing conversation, or a spare-tire measure in a moment of crisis.

The truth is, loving God is a way of life. It is a devoted commitment that consumes one's very existence.

Paul caught the spirit of this challenge when he wrote: “For me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). For the great apostle, life simply had no meaning apart from serving God through Jesus Christ.

Genuine love is demonstrated in diligent obedience (Jn. 14:15; Gal. 5:6). Love for God is not a mushy, superficial emotion. It is a vibrant lifestyle of serious dedication.

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth” (1 Jn. 3:18).

But how does one learn to love God? Surely not by accident. Since we have neither seen the Creator face to face, nor heard his voice (Jn. 1:18), how can we love him?

The answer is simple. We **learn to love him** when we are exposed to the information about how much he loves us (cf. Eph. 3:18-19) and how that love has been expressed. “We love, because he first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19).

Love is infectious! And the motivating information is found in the Scriptures.

For example, God’s love has been universally manifested to humanity (Jn. 3:16). Who, but God, loves so magnanimously? Moreover, his love is not abstract but is manifested concretely, in the gift of his Son.

“God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

Oh, such love! It is demonstrative (Gal. 1:4), unselfish (Phil. 2:5ff), inexpressible (2 Cor. 9:15), and unquenchable (cf. Rom. 8:35ff). Who can fathom it? It takes one’s breath away.

But what does this disposition involve, practically speaking? First, as suggested above, it implies an attitude which respects the voice of God as evinced in biblical revelation. One of the crucial needs of the day is a reverence for the Scriptures. A disregard for the authority of the Bible is at the root of every problem in society, and within the church as well.

Second, a love for God is characterized by a **spirit of humility** which longs for guidance.

One of the interesting words of the New Testament is the term “obedience” (cf. Rom. 1:5; 16:26). This noun derives from the Greek term **hupakoe** (from **hupo**, “under,” and **akouo**, “to hear”). The word thus suggests the idea of sitting under a teacher and eagerly listening to his words with a view to implementing the instruction.

That is the very attitude one must have toward God as he considers the message of the Bible. The noble Bereans exemplified the right mode of thinking when they received the word with all “readiness of mind” (**prothumia** — Acts 17:11). The Greek word suggests forwardness of mind, and it depicts an attitude that is ready and willing to follow God’s will.

How to Love Others

It ought to be relatively easy to learn to love God in view of his marvelous benevolence. It is harder to learn to love our fellows. Enemies care nothing for us. Our neighbors occasionally treat us badly. Even family members can disappoint us.

How can we cultivate a love for those who are so marred by the effects of sin?

First, as mentioned earlier, one must recognize, based upon historical biblical revelation, that every human being is a product of divine creation, and therefore is a **being of value**.

“The Biblical teaching about man is not that man is a collection of chemical elements, not that man is part of the brute creation, but that man is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27)” (Barclay 1957, 308).

Paul, by inspiration, presented a tremendous challenge when he admonished that we are to do nothing through faction or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind “each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

How in the name of reason can we do that?

While it is a general truth that “all that a man hath will he give for his [own] life” (Job 2:4), Jesus declared: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn. 15:13).

Tenney describes this as the “highest achievement of human love,” while noting that “divine love” goes beyond this (1948, 229; cf. Romans 5:8). The greatest lexicon on love in the history of human literature is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4ff. Read it and learn from it. It will never be surpassed. (See **The Challenge of Agape Love.**)

We must observe, however, that love is not some anemic sentimentality that overlooks wickedness and error as though such do not exist. God loves us but he does not tolerate our rebellion. Love doesn’t excuse sin, but it does exhibit kindness to others—even enemies. And it is magnanimous to those who are trying to do right. Peter declares that “love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). The Christian is always eager to forgive his brother when that individual seeks such by means of the divinely-appointed method (cf. Lk. 17:3).

Can we possibly imagine how many human problems would be solved if only love were generously exercised? Would there be wars? Not a one. Would divorce ravage the land? It would not. And what of our prisons? They would be empty, crumbling in decay, for love does not rob, rape, or slaughter (cf. Rom. 13:8-10).

It is appropriate to observe that our love for others must attempt to pattern itself after the love that God has exhibited for us.

A certain snobbish Jew, in a verbal joust with Christ, dared to explore the meaning of “love your neighbor as yourself.” He frivolously asked: “Who is my neighbor?” For his trouble, he got the parable of the good Samaritan (see Lk. 10:25ff).

One’s neighbor is anyone—of whatever background—who needs his help. True love never discriminates. Is this more than we can bear?

How to Love Self

It is not wrong to love oneself. If one doesn't love self, it would be unreasonable to admonish man to love his neighbor as himself. But we seem to be living in an age when numerous people deprecate themselves.

Many appear to entertain very little if any sense of personal worth. Some feel they have little value because they were conceived out of wedlock. Others imagine that they are worthless because a parent abandoned them as a child. Others have been made to feel less than whole due to their racial, economic, or social status. Then there are those individuals who languish under the burden of having been molested in their youth. These sorts of things haunt the minds of troubled souls.

What the Christian needs to convey to such folks is the fact that they do have **intrinsic worth** regardless of the unfortunate circumstances of the past. Jesus declared that every human soul has value. It is worth more than the whole world (Mt. 16:26). Christ died for the potential salvation of every person (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Would he have given his life for that which is of no consequence?

Additionally, there is that self-depreciation that engulfs us when we sin. Our sensitive conscience is confronted with the awful reality that we have disappointed our holy Creator. Perhaps we disgraced our family and humiliated ourselves. Sin can immerse one in a terrible sea of personal disdain.

Reflect upon the agony of David when he contemplated his transgression with Bathsheba (Psa. 51). Again, though, we must remind ourselves that it was for this very reason that the Son of God entered this contaminated earthly environment. We can rejoice that we are able to find dignity, in spite of our sins, in the redeeming blood of the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29).

In light of Golgotha, any person can lift up his head with a smile on his face. Love yourself, because God does!

In the final analysis, the serious student must acknowledge that the New Testament opens up vistas of love never dreamed of by the most brilliant of human intellects. Let us revel in the sublimeness of this exalted theme, and seek to meet its challenge. – Wayne Jackson

Continuing the Thought & Theme Thread Wayne Jackson Asks -

“Do We Delight to Do His Will?” By Wayne Jackson

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Christ warned that they had left their first love (Rev. 2:4). Though they had maintained **the truth**, their delight in Christ had lost its shine. No longer did they possess a child-like wonder and faith for the Master (Matt. 18:2ff). And so the Lord begged them to “repent and do the first works” (Rev. 2:5).

How can we rekindle a love for God? How can we renew our dedication to his blessed Son?

Perhaps we might ponder that question as we consider a little gem tucked away in Psalm 40. The Psalmist declared,

“I delight to do your will, O my God;
Yes, your law is within my heart” (Psa. 40:8).

What a marvelous exclamation!

The Hebrews writer declares by inspiration that this passage is fulfilled in the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 10:7ff).

Jesus: Our Example of the Delightful Servant

Christ was ever involved in the things of his Father (Lk. 2:49) He once confessed with amazing frankness, “I always do the things that are pleasing to him” (Jn. 8:29).

And when vicious Jewish leaders so desperately sought to find in him something worthy of condemnation, he challenged, “Which of you convicts me of sin?” (Jn. 8:46). Befuddled, they could only mumble the absurd charge that he was demon-possessed.

John the baptizer introduced Jesus as “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). He was a Lamb, which Peter affirmed to be without blemish or spot (1 Pet. 1:19). Yes, Jesus “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Pet. 2:22).

That **perfect obedience** he maintained unto death, hence “without blemish” he offered himself to God (Heb. 9:14).

Truly, Jesus delighted in doing Heaven’s will.

Do We Delight to Do His Will?

One of the great tragedies of our time — of all time — is this.

How many really **delight** in doing the will of their Creator? The answer is sad — fewer than should.

Do we meditate day and night upon heavenly oracles (Psa. 1:2)? Do we long after, even pant for, the commands of our God (Psa. 119:131)?

“How sweet are your words to my taste!
Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psa. 119:103).
“I love your commands above gold,
yes, above fine gold” (Psa. 119: 127).

How many of Jehovah’s children can genuinely express these sentiments today? The answer might be frightening!

Christianity: A Blessing or a Burden?

It takes only a casual observer to note that religion as practiced by some members of the body of Christ seems more of a burdensome drudgery that is but painfully tolerated.

There is that type of “saint” who drags sleepy-eyed into the Sunday morning service, having skipped a Bible study because it does not pique his interest. The hour’s worship activities are endured with a zombie-like stare revealing maximum boredom.

These poor souls do not scruple to absent themselves on Sunday evening or from a mid-week Bible study. Once a week is sacrifice aplenty!

Do they ever talk of spiritual matters? No, more often their interests are confined to the worldly. Social media is proof enough of what their heart treasures most. And their financial support of the Lord’s work wouldn’t even pay for the communion bread they absent-mindedly consume.

They are listless, lukewarm and lifeless. They grumble and actually, are just plain miserable.

The question is — why?

How to Delight in the Will of God

The answer lies in the very text with which this discussion was begun, Psa.40:8.

The Lord delighted in doing Jehovah's will **because the law of God was in his heart!**

Many brethren know the truth from an intellectual standpoint, but their hearts are far from their Master. The heart, as well as the head, needs conversion.

In other words, service needs to be motivated from love as well as a recognition of duty. It is this love, this fervor, this passion for daily serving God, that makes life delightful. And legions know it not!

The world, like an octopus, tries to get its deadly tentacles around the hearts of God's children. It is as quicksand that would suck us into the destruction of hell.

If the Christian is to survive, he must store the word of God into his heart daily.

“Your word have I laid up in my heart,
that I might not sin against you” (Psa. 119:11).

“The law of God is in his heart;
none of his steps shall slide,” (Psa. 37:31).

Every facet of Christianity is designed to **strengthen the disciple** of the Lord, to prevent the erosion of his soul by the world. Praise, prayer, Bible study — these and other spiritual things are sources of divine strength.

Regretfully, however, we often **neglect** to give attention to spiritual things. It is possible to be lulled into a spiritual numbness and thus be forever lost. – Apologetics Press

Controversial Church Author Keven Pendergrass Makes a Point:



**THE HEART OF THE LAW VS.
THE LETTER OF THE LAW**

“I cannot tell you how many old sermons I have mocking the idea of those who made a distinction between the heart of the law vs. the letter of the law. Some people call it the Spirit or the intent of the law vs. the letter of the law.

The idea is that the letter of the law is what the law literally says. Whereas, the heart of the law is the intention or purpose of the law. Thus, at times, we may find ourselves fulfilling the heart of the law even if the letter of the law was technically broken. Alternatively, we may find ourselves justifying our actions based upon the letter of the law while breaking the Spirit of the law.

Dr. David Miller from Apologetics Press did not mince his words when he said:

The ‘spirit vs. letter’ contrast is gobbledygook that is ‘better felt than told.’ It makes no sense...it is impossible to represent faithfully ‘the spirit of the law’ (i.e., to have the right attitude) while acting out of harmony with the specific details of the law.

Let’s begin [our opposition argument] with a simple Old Testament story found in 2nd Chronicles 30: 1 - 27. Here, the Jews were coming together for the Feast of Unleavened Bread & Passover. The Bible tells us that they were in violation of at least two commands of the letter of the law: (1) They were not ceremonially cleansed (v.18), and (2) they kept the feast an extra week longer than they were supposed to (v.23). In fact, the Bible specifically tells us that they did these things ‘contrary to the law’ (v.18). However, they were not condemned or

struck dead. Instead, King Hezekiah prayed for them and they were accepted by God because their hearts were in the right place (v.20). The text even tells us:

The Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people...So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the Son of David kind of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to [God's] holy habitation in heaven. (2nd Chronicles 30:20, 26-27).

Here we have a very clear case study narrative of those who were in violation of the letter of the law, yet were justified because they had kept the intent and purpose of the law. The whole reason this feast was given is so that they could praise God and He could be glorified. Even though the letter of the law was not kept, the heart of the law was and God blessed them for it. Contrary to Dr. Miller's assessment, this idea is not 'gobbledygook;' this idea is rooted in God's word.

Even more powerful than this story is the example of Jesus Christ Himself. He constantly dealt with those who were more interested in what the law actually said instead of what the purpose of the law actually was. The Jews were always trying to justify their actions based upon the letter of the law while completely missing the heart of the law.

One example of this is found in Mark 7:1-13. The law of Moses required the Jews to honor their parents. This included the idea of caring for them in their various needs (Mk. 7:10; Deut. 5:16).

Yet, some of the Jews had created a 'letter of the law loophole' to excuse their responsibility to their parents. They would designate certain portions of their financial resources as 'corban' (Mark 7:11). Let me explain what that means.

The Greek word 'korban' is related to the term 'korbanas,' which signifies the temple treasury offering. The Jews had taken the word corban and coined it as a vow term.

One could designate their financial resources as corban as a way of reserving it. Jesus pointed out to these Jews that they had neglected their parental responsibility by an appeal to corban. He said:

But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. Thus, you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that. (Mark 7:11-13).

Jesus was rebuking them because the money that might have been used to provide for their aging parents was dedicated to the temple treasury. These Jews had found a way to justify their actions. Saying the money is 'Corban' would exempt a person from his responsibility to his parents.

Not only did the Jews use the letter of the law to justify things that were wrong (but technically authorized because of the letter of the law), but they also condemned Jesus when He followed the heart of the law, but broke the letter of the law.

In John 5:1-17, Jesus was technically 'working' on the Sabbath because He healed a man. Even Jesus said He was working, which violated the letter of the law (John 5:17; Exodus 20:10).

The apostle John wrote:

This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5: 18).

Jesus was technically guilty of breaking the letter of the law. However, Jesus later explains that He was guiltless because He was not breaking the intention of the law (John 7:20-24). The Jews were not judging according to righteous judgment. **Jesus taught that righteous judgment is not according to the letter of the law, but according to the heart(of the law).**

If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? 24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment. (John 7:23-24).

But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart' (1 Samuel 16:7).

If the Jews could understand the difference between the letter of the law and the heart of the law when it came to circumcision on the Sabbath, then why could they not understand it when it came to Jesus healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath?

Another example is found when Jesus' disciples were being accused of violating the Sabbath by plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath.

Based upon all of the aforementioned, let us begin to draw some important conclusions. Here is where all of this gets interesting. The Bible teaches us that God is a Holy God and cannot be in fellowship with sin (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). He cannot even look upon sin.

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. (Hab. 1:13).

Think back to the story found in 2 Chronicles 30. If, indeed, these Jews were wrong and in sin, then that means that God could have not heard their prayer and accepted their praise – if indeed, their praise was sinful. However, God did accept their praise and was in fellowship with them. Therefore, this story proves that one can violate the letter of the law while keeping the intent of the law without sinning.

Now, let us go back to the example of Jesus. The Bible tells us that Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Yet, Jesus violated the letter of the Sabbath law (John 5:17-18). This means either one of two things. Either (1) Jesus did sin or; (2) violating the letter of the law is not equivalent to sin. If we are going to believe that Jesus is our sinless sacrifice, then our only conclusion is that violating the letter of the law is not equivalent to sin.

Some will argue that Jesus never violated the actual Sabbath law, but only the Jews' laws, which they had added to the Sabbath. However, aside from Jesus admitting to 'working' on the Sabbath, and aside from the apostle John saying that Jesus violated the Sabbath, this argument actually further proves the point that Jesus is concerned with the intention of the law and not the letter of the law.

The letter of the law simply says do not work on the Sabbath, period (Exodus 20:10). Strictly speaking, the letter of the law said to do no work. No qualifiers, no exceptions. Any qualifiers or exceptions can only come through the heart of the law. Jesus confessed to working on the Sabbath (John 5:17-18). However, the work He was doing, while in violating of the letter of the law, was not in violation of the heart of the law, as even the Jews understood in other scenarios (Luke 13:15-16; 14:1-6).

1 John 3:4 says that sin is a violation of the law, but what law? The letter of the law or the intent and heart of the law? It could not be the letter, but **the purpose of the law**. In fact, this is not only demonstrated by previously mentioned examples, but is a constant theme before Jesus even came to earth:

Rend your hearts and not your garments. (Joel 2:13).

In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. (Psalms 40:6).

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalms 51:16-17).

What all of this means is that when the intent and heart of the law is being met, then the law is being kept and fulfilled. One can complete the letter of the law while still sinning because they have failed to keep the heart of the law. However, if one keeps the heart of the law, then they have not sinned.” – K.P.

Love Versus Duty. From William George Jordan We Learn:

Duty is forced, like a pump; love is spontaneous, like a fountain. Duty is prescribed and formal; it is part of the red tape of life. It means running on moral rails. Analyze, if you will, any of the great historic instances of loyalty to duty, and whenever they ring true you will find the presence of the real element that made the act almost divine. It was duty — plus love.

Duty is a hard, mechanical process for making men do things that love would make easy. It is a poor understudy to love. It is not a high enough motive with which to inspire humanity.

Duty is the body to which love is the soul! Duty is a hard, mechanical process for making men do things that love would make easy. It is a poor understudy to love. It is not a high enough motive with which to inspire humanity. Duty is the body to which love is the soul. Love, in the divine alchemy of life, transmutes all duties into privileges, all responsibilities into joys. The workman who drops his tools at the stroke of twelve, as suddenly as if he had been struck by lightning may be doing his duty — but he is doing nothing more. No man has made a great success of his life or a fit preparation for immortality by doing merely duty. He must do that & more. If he puts love into his work, the ‘more’ will be easy.

– William George Jordan

In Summation, Seven Significant Statements:

1. **Godly Love.** There are both spiritual dangers and forever consequences in either over-simplification or over-complication of the Bible message.
2. **Heartfelt Religion.** Precept & Principle Equal Components. Neither aspect is to be sacrificed in observing the other.
3. **Mature Christians Evidence a Higher Love.** Such a higher love is less of mixed motive and more pure as to intention.
4. **Image Deo.** Adding to the Acquired Image of God – Adding to Godlikeness Through Free Will Imitation.

5. **Two Types & Four Levels of Agape Command in Three Dimensions of Compliance.** In the Parable of the Good Samaritan [Luke 10: 23 - 37] The Master Teacher Outlines How Our Multiple Relationships [Family/Friends/Enemies] Do Not Ordinarily Conflict In Order To Demonstrate Love.
6. **Duty Plus Love.** Seeking the Highest Good or the Salvation of All Mankind Does Not Require Liking All Persons Equally.
7. **Words Versus Deeds. Salvation is From Faith in Action!**



