

## **AGAPE LOVE**

1 John 3:16 ... “By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

There are several types of love. Four of these types are described in the Bible and are represented by words in the Greek language. Eros is romantic love. Philia defines deep friendships and brotherly love. Storge (pronounced stor-jay) is the term for relationships among family members. Agape (pronounced uh-ga-pay) is the highest form of love. It is defined by unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love for another. All of these forms of love are good in the right context, but Agape love is the form that God has for us. It was the Father's demonstration of Agape love that motivated him to sacrifice in death, his own son for our sins.

However, it is not only God who can and does express Agape – sacrificial – love for us. We are commanded to do the same for others, as expressed in today's verse. The verse says that we can know the deep, selfless, sacrificial love that God has for us, through the cross. And...we must be willing to demonstrate that love toward our Christian brothers and sisters (the brethren in today's verse).

You might be willing to make sacrifices for your lover, but Eros alone may not compel you to run into a burning building to rescue that person, or to take a bullet for him or her. Philia love can be strong, but it alone probably will not be enough for you to give your good heart to save an acquaintance's life. Storge comes the closest to Agape, but even your love for your brother or your mother might not be sufficient for you to die for them. Only Agape love has the capacity to give everything you have – including your life – for another person, even a stranger.

We use the word “sacrifice” too often and too liberally. We say we are sacrificing when we walk to school instead of riding a trike. We claim to sacrifice when we give the last little bit of ice cream to our child, instead of eating it ourselves. Perhaps you felt you were sacrificing when you took a job to help your sibling through college. Although these are all examples of something similar to sacrifice, they do not compare to the Bible's definition. The purpose of today's lesson is to help you understand the extreme form of love that God has for you. You cannot understand that by comparing it to the love for your boyfriend, your wife, your mother or your BFF. It can only be understood in your willingness to die for another believer, even someone you may have never met.

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