

## God's Kind of Love

*(1 John 4:7-11 International Children's Bible) "Dear friends, we should love each other, because love comes from God. The person who loves has become God's child and knows God. {8} Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. {9} This is how God showed his love to us: He sent his only Son into the world to give us life through him. {10} True love is God's love for us, not our love for God. God sent his Son to be the way to take away our sins. {11} That is how much God loved us, dear friends! So we also must love each other."*

The Apostle John tells us "we should love one another." In the original Greek language of the text, John used the word "agape." He says we are to "agape" one another. This word is used at least three hundred and twenty in the New Testament. God considers "agape" of utmost importance. It is a special word. "Agape" specifically means God's kind of love, or love according to His perspective, His definition and His expectations for us.

God built us to thrive on love. It is part of our original design. At times, however, we fail to understand its value to us. There are those of us who simply do not know how to love, or be loved. Some of us are just not equipped for it. People use the word love in many ways. We say, "I love you," or "I love pizza," or "I love to swim," or "I love my mother." We use the word "love" in many ways, with many implied meanings.

- For some, love is elusive. They search for it and never find it. Their lives are incomplete and lacking in the one thing that all of us need.
- For others, love is a series of intense, uncontrollable feelings & experiences. For these people, love becomes an emotional search. Often the search for love becomes an abuse of the genuine meaning of "agape." It is a counterfeit of the real thing and only leads to emotional damage and disappointment. They find their feelings are beyond their control. The resulting experiences are ones they could have done without. This is not "agape."
- Then there are those who find love to be a series of intense, controlling feelings. Their direction of their lives seems no longer in their hands. Life is like being in a boat in a fast moving river without oars, a motor or an anchor. This too, is not "agape."
- Some find them to be both uncontrollable and controlling feelings. It is like being a puppet on a string. There is no control and everything is controlled by others or by circumstances. Obviously, this is not God's kind of love either.

Is it really so illusive? Must it be uncontrollable? Must it control us? Today, we live in a world of very little authentic love - very little of God's kind of love ("agape"). This style of life is increasing... and dangerously contagious!

## **The World's Kind of Love**

*(1 John 2:15-17 International Children's Bible) "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} These are the evil things in the world: wanting things to please our sinful selves, wanting the sinful things we see, being too proud of the things we have. But none of those things comes from the Father. All of them come from the world. {17} The world is passing away. And everything that people want in the world is passing away. But the person who does what God wants lives forever."*

### **Three Easily Identifiable Characteristics of the World's Kind of Love**

- 1. It is always selfish. The world's kind of love drives us to want to please ourselves without due regard for others.**

It takes to feed our earthly desires and does not give anything of eternal significance. It makes emotionally charged demands that our wants, needs and desires be met. It focuses inwardly. Its priority is on us, not on others. It is opposite of God's kind of love, which is always focused on others.

- 2. It is never described by a decision or commitment to meet the wants, needs and desires of someone else.**

The world's kind of love has no room for grace and mercy. By the Apostle John's definition (in 1 John 2:15-17, above) it is in its essence, evil, self-serving and prideful. It will have nothing to do with genuine self-sacrifice.

- 3. It always displays an urge to possess - or a desire to have an experience - all for selfish, self-serving reasons.**

Unfortunately, the world's kind of love never satisfies. Whatever and whoever we might possess, and as many experiences as we might have, the world's kind of love will never give us satisfaction. It will demand more and more. It evolves into an obsession with the ways of the world. Our lives are defined by the world's definition of love. We are driven to keep trying to find what we need, but we never do find it. At the end, all we have is an empty spot in our hearts. Nothing lives there except hurt and a wish for what might have been or could have been. Along the way, we have damaged ourselves and certainly done the same to others. At its root all along has been pride. The world's kind of love has as its foundation, unquenchable lust and uncompromising pride.

*(1 John 2:15-17 NKJV) "For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world."*

## The Game of Monopoly

Many of us who grew up in America have played a board game called Monopoly. The object of the game is to work our way around a board accumulating properties and wealth, at the expense of the other players. Here is how it works. You roll the dice and as you land on a particular property, you have the opportunity to purchase it. However, if you land on another player's property, you must pay rent to him or her. As the game progresses, you trade with others, trying to gain the upper hand and accumulate the best properties. As the game proceeds, you hope to cause all your friends to lose their properties to you. It reaches a point where they have nothing left to give you. Your final act (often with great glee) is to kick them off the board as losers. You are "the winner." Then, the game goes back in the box.

The world's kind of love is like a monopoly game. At the end of the day, you may think you are the winner, but all that happened is that you have taken everything from the other players. Then, the game is finished and it all goes into a box. The truth is, when we arrive at the end of the game of life, it all goes into a box! Then, we will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and be faced with His question, *"Why should I let you into my kingdom?"*

**Have you ever heard it said, "Love is blind?"**

Love is not blind. It is not having that warm fuzzy feeling. Love is not being so blind we cannot focus on reality... then walking around bumping into things. Have you ever heard someone say, *"I am falling in love"*? The problem with "falling in love" is the falling feels really good until you stop falling - because you hit something. In most cases, you hit reality, and it hurts!

## What is God's Kind of Love?

### A. Love is **not** love unless it is a reflection of God!

What do people typically see in you? Do you look like, sound like and act like Jesus? Do people come away from an encounter with you desiring to draw closer to God because they have found a little of Him and His love in you? Are your attitudes and actions a projection of "agape?"

### B. Love is a commandment from God.

*(Luke 10:27 NKJV) "...You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'"*

A commandment is a requirement from God from which there is no retreat and about which there is no option. Yes, we always have free will, but would be a fearful thing one day to find yourself in the hands of God, trying to

explain why your life reflected a disregard for this New Covenant commandment.

*(Hebrews 10:31 NKJV) "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

### **C. God's kind of love is the purest representation of the character of God.**

*(John 3:16-17 NKJV) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. {17} For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*

God's character reveals His giving nature. It shows His concern and care for His creation, for those He loves. At the cross, His love put us above any concern for personal pain or personal gain. From the very beginning of time, God consistently provided for us through His love.

#### **First Biblical Example of God's Kind of Love (agape)**

*(Genesis 2:15-17 NKJV) "Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. {16} And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; {17} but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall **not** eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

#### **Second Biblical Example of God's Kind of Love (agape)**

*(Genesis 2:18 NKJV) "And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

Two things happened.

1. God gave Adam boundaries of safety.

2. God provided for Adam's need - He gave Adam a companion.

Both (1+2) were **acts of divine love**. God's kind of love brings safety, and establishes boundaries to protect those you give it to. It provides for those who need what only "agape" - God's kind of love can give.

### **D. The defining characteristic of God's kind of love: It is by its nature, sacrificial and giving nature.**

God's kind of love always chooses to be sacrificial and giving. Otherwise, it would be a counterfeit and fit the world's definition. It is not a counterfeit. It is the real thing. It will bring life, satisfaction and significance to those who obey its commands, seeing its value and exercising it as a lifestyle.

**Let me give you my definition of God's kind of love at work in us:**

***God's kind of love is my intentional, consistent effort to bring as much of God's grace, His presence and His provision to someone, regardless of what it costs me.***

**God's kind of love will always transfer grace. Here is my definition of God's grace:**

*Grace is all the goodness of God, which is the expression of His limitless, unbounding love. It is just waiting for God to release it in a time of need. It need not be earned, nor can it be. It is what you could never do for yourself and only He could do for you. It is sufficient for every circumstance. It is most often expressed through one person to another.*

God's kind of love will always affirm a person's worth. It will always bring the presence of God... and do so without regard to personal cost or personal loss. God's kind of love is an act of pure giving. It does not play monopoly with people's lives.

### **A Life-changing Prayer in Malaysia**

We have been given the gift of giving God's kind of love freely to others. I would like to share a personal testimony of a moment I found incredibly humbling and profoundly satisfying.

**My wife, Nancy and I had been in Malacca, Malaysia teaching at a Chinese language Bible school. I had spent a couple weeks on the subject of Bible Study Methods and we were about to depart back to America. It was our final evening of ministry there and I was asked to preach at a local Chinese language church. All the students were in attendance. I finished preaching and began to pray for the people of the church. Everyone wanted prayer. My wife was on one side of the altar praying for some of the women and I was on the other side with a line of people wanting my prayers. One of them was a young man I had spent a little time with in the past few weeks. He had taken the English name, John. (It is common practice for Chinese people to adopt an English name when in contact with English speakers, as it makes communication easier.)**

**As John came up to me, I asked, "John, what can I pray for you? His reply surprised me and instantly humbled me. John replied, "Will you pray that I can have the same love for people that you have shown us?" I hugged him and began to pray. He fell to the floor weeping. I kneeled and continued to pray over him. I was struck in my heart. It was a life-changing moments when God spoke in the midst of John's words. I would never be the same. I saw clearly, what God hungered for others to see in me. I was to be a walking, living demonstration of God's kind of love. There could be nothing more important.**

Will you be a demonstration of "agape," His kind of love? Will you answer the call to let your light shine so brightly that people will not help but see the love of God in you? Will your attitudes and actions clearly reflect the glory of a God who cares so much about His creation? What choices will you make?

On December First, Two Thousand Eight, I was watching TV as then President-elect Obama announced his cabinet. He said something of profound truth, *“We can shape our times instead of being shaped by them.”* These words impacted me far beyond the political implications and intentions of the moment. Yes, we can shape our times. How can we do this? If we are going to shape our world for good, we must understand it is up to us to transfer God’s kind of love from within us... to a place within someone else. We are to be vessels of grace, poured on the wounds and hurts, and yes, the potential and promise of those around us.

In the same appearance on TV, then Vice President-elect Joseph Biden said, *“We will lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.”* He too, was speaking words of political implication and intention. I heard far beyond those meanings. I heard the Holy Spirit speak to my heart, that by the power of our examples, we can show the life-giving and life-changing power of God’s kind of love. Therein lays the God ordained, unlimited power to make a difference.

## **What makes God’s Kind of Love so Powerful?**

*(1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NKJV) ““Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; {5} does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; {6} does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. {8} Love never fails...”*

- **Love is patient and kind.**
- **It has no envy.**
- **It has no pride.**
- **It does not behave rudely. (It honors others.)**
- **It is not provoked to anger or other unhealthy emotions.**
- **It chooses not to think evil, sinful thoughts toward others.**
- **It takes no pleasure in the things God disapproves of.**
- **It rejoices in, and celebrates the truth.**
- **It survives the tough times by believing the right things.**
- **It has hope, founded on the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ’s promises.**
- **It will endure and finish in ways that please the Lord.**
- **It never fails. It always shines in ways that have eternal value!**

*(Matthew 5:16 NKJV) “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

God bless you as you shine for Him.