

True Love

John 21:15-17

Introduction: Who among us has not dreamed of “true love?” That perfect person who fulfills our every desire and meets all our needs. Yet, many people who fall in love discover you can also fall out of love just as easily. Some people have described love as a bank account where you can make love deposits or withdrawals. Perhaps, love can be described as water in a bucket that lasts as long as the bucket (relationship) doesn’t spring a leak.

No doubt, love is a tough subject. When we have love it seems impossible to lose and when we lose love it seems impossible to regain. Young people often ruin their lives because they believe they are in love based upon a feeling only to discover that after the romance wears off something is missing in their relationship.

Therefore, it would be prudent for us to examine the biblical prospective of “true love.”

I. The New Testament uses two Greek words that I believe coupled together equates to true love.

A. Phileo: The emotional love that comes from the heart. It reflects our feelings toward someone else. It is displayed as affection such as in a kiss (a mark of tenderness). It is the type of love that forms personal attachments.

B. Agape: Is the love that values and esteems others. It is unselfish; ready to serve and even sacrifice for another. It seeks the better welfare of all and works no ill will to any (1 Cor. 13:4-8a).

C. “Now let's face some facts. Agape love is what keeps us doing what we ought to do, but phileo love is what allows us to enjoy it. We don't get married because we are in "agape love" with someone. We get married on the basis of romantic (phileo) love. Romantic love is a great motivator for us. It motivates men to write silly poetry and women to give up an incredible amount of independence for the men they love.” (Kercheville)

II. A closer look at agape:

A. Agape love comes from the mind. It is one’s will as a matter of duty or principle. It is a caring type of love that concerns itself with the needs of others. This love isn’t earned. It is not dependent upon physical attraction, feelings or emotions.

B. God is agape love (Rom. 5:8; 8:37-39; 1 John 4:7-21).

C. We are commanded to have this type of love for God (Luke 10:27; 1 John 5:3).

D. Agape is the type of love most young people overlook in their relationships. The reason we have so many people living together outside of marriage is due to the lack of agape love in the relationship. Marriage proves one's agape love. True love cannot exist without the commitment for one another that comes with agape love.

III. A closer look at phileo:

A. Phileo is the affectionate type of love. Since it is a feeling, it is the first thing we associate with love.

B. We are also commanded to have this love for one another (Rom. 12:10).

C. However, this type of love can exist independent of agape love. This is the reason Jesus repeatedly asked Peter if he agape loved Him. Peter kept replying that he phileo loved Christ (John 21:15-17).

D. Phileo love without agape love is not true love. Many people are romantically attracted to others without having any concern for them. It could be a physical thing or an emotional thing but its not the real thing.

IV. We must develop true love for all our brethren.

A. True love for our brethren is what distinguishes us as Christians (John 13:35).

1. We are to agape love our brethren (1 John 3:10-11, 14-18).

2. We are also to phileo love our brethren (1 Pet. 1:22).

B. I'm not suggesting that our love for one another should rise to the level of romance. However, we should have the affection for one another that the word phileo conveys.

C. Should we hug one another? Four books in the New Testament concludes with the command to greet one another with a kiss (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14). It is certainly not inappropriate though socially awkward.

Conclusion: What should we conclude concerning true love (1 Pet. 3:8-9)? We are called to truly love one another. After all, in the here after we are going to spend an eternity together. Would you want to spend an eternity with others you don't truly love?