

“A Biblical Description of Agape Love”

(Sunday Morning July 19th, 2026)

Passage: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

O.S. I Believe That Most of You Would Agree With Me This Morning When I Say That the Way Our Culture Describes Love and the Way the Bible Describes Love are Very Different

- > **For You See, Our Culture Describes Love as a Feeling or an Emotion, But the Bible Describes Love as an Action**
- > **A Person Falls Into Love, Our Culture Says, in Much the Same Way as a Person Might Fall Into a Ditch**
- > **And a Person Falls Out of Love in Much the Same Way as a Person Might Fall Out of a Tree**
- > **Elvis Presley Sang Many Years Ago “*I Can’t Help FALLING in Love With You*”**
- > **Then, the Righteous Brothers Came Along and Sang “*You’ve Lost That Lovin’ FEELIN*”**
- > **And Then, the Rock Group “*The Doors*” Came Along and Sang “*Hello, I Love You Won’t You Tell Me Your Name*”**

Q.n = That Was a Really Deep Song, Wasn’t It?

- > **You See, Our Culture, Listen Now, Our Culture Describes Love as a Feeling or an Emotion, But the Bible Describes Love as an Action**
 - > **In Fact, What We Have in This Passage is the Greatest Description of Agape Love in the Bible, and This is the Highest Form of Love (E...Eros, Storgay, Phileo)**
 - > **And Listen, From Verses 4-7 Paul Simply Gives Us a Long List of Verbs That Describe How This Love Acts or Behaves**
 - > **He Does This Because It is Really Impossible for Anyone to Define Agape Love; We Can Really Only Describe It in Action**
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St = Now, if I Had to Choose One Action Word to Describe the Essence of Biblical Love, the Word I Would Choose is the Word “Sacrifice,” Because This is What is Most Often Associated With It

-> *John 3:16*, for Example, is Familiar to Most of Us; It Says, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

Q.n – What is That?

Ans = That is Sacrifice

-> In *John 15:13*, the Bible Says *"Greater love has no one than this, THAT HE LAY DOWN HIS LIFE for his friends"*

Q.n = What is That?

Ans = That is Sacrifice

-> There are Many of These Verses; So, I’m Not Going to Mention All of Them This Morning, But I Will Mention Just One More That Should Sound Familiar

-> It is Found in *Ephesians 5:25*, and This is What It Says; It Says, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and (Listen) GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR HER”*

Q.n = What is That?

Ans = That is Sacrifice

T.S. So, as You Can See, the Way Our Culture Describes Love, and the Way That the Bible Describes Love are Very Different

-> And There is No Passage of Scripture That Describes Biblical Agape Love in More Detail Than This One Right Here

-> In Fact, This is Often Referred to as *“The Love Chapter”*

-> For You See, *“Agape”* Love is Described in This Passage Which is the Highest Form of Love (E...It is Unselfish, and Sacrificial, and Altruistic)

-> Studying This Passage is Like Dissecting a Beautiful Flower and Examining the Exquisite Beauty of Each Petal; and So, That is What We are Going to do This Morning

I. Agape Love Should be Our Priority

- > In These First Three Verses, Paul is Making Comparisons and Contrasts, and He is Using Hyperboles, Exaggerations for Effect, to Make His Point
- > In Fact, I Want You to Notice How Many Times the Word “ALL” Appears Here

Verses 1-3 (Read)

1) Love is Greater Than Speech

- > There is No Other Verse in the Bible That Mentions “*Tongues of Angels;*” So, I Believe Paul is Simply Using This Expression for the Sake of Hyperbole
- > His Point is That Agape Love is Greater Than the Most Eloquent of Human Speech
- > And Human Speech, as We All Should Know, Can be a Very Powerful Thing
- > In Fact, We are Told in *Proverbs 18:21* That “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*”
- > We are All Impressed by Powerful Communicators, Wordsmiths, Eloquent Orators Who Can Get Their Point Across With Force
- > But Paul Says That You Can be One of the Most Powerful Speakers This World Has Ever Known; But if You Speak Without Love, Your Speech Will be Worthless
- > He Compares It to “*A Noisy Gong*” or “*A Clanging Symbol*” Which Was an Image He Drew From What Pagans Did Before They Entered Their Temples (E...)
- > In *Ephesians 4:15*, Paul Gives Us Some Wonderful Advice When He Says That We Should “*...speak the truth in love*”
- > I Believe We Would All Agree That People Need to Hear the Truth; But if We Communicate the Truth in a Harsh, Cruel and Insensitive Way, Our Speech Will Not be Well Received (and Therefore, It Will be Deficient and Ineffective)
- > I Came Across a Phrase Many Years Ago That I Like Very Much, and It Goes Like This “*I am Never Persuasive When I am Abrasive*” (I Want You to Say That With Me)

T.S. 1) Love is Greater Than Speech

2) Love is Greater Than Scholarship

Verse 2 (Read)

- > **Paul Gives Us Another Comparison Here; He Says, in Essence, That a Person Could Absorb a Vast Amount of Bible Knowledge**
- > **But if They Have Accomplished All of That Without Love, Paul Says That They Haven't Really Accomplished Anything**
- > **In Fact, Back in *1 Cor 8:1* Paul Had Said This; He Had Said, "...knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies"**

Q.n = So, Does Our World Need More Bible Scholars Who Can Sit Around and Discuss Systematic Theology and Parse Greek Sentences?

Ans = Not Hardly

- > **Another Phrase I Like, and I Think Every Pastor Should Learn is This One "*People Don't Care About What You Know Until They Know That You Care*" (E...)**
- > **The Church at Ephesus, for Example, Was Filled With Bible Knowledge and Sound Doctrine**
- > **They Could Spot a Heretic a Mile Away, and They Wouldn't Have Tolerated His Teaching for a New York Minute**
- > **But in *Rev 2:4*, Jesus Said This to Them; He Said, "*But I have {this} against you, that you have left your first love*"**
- > **Then, He Graciously Told Them in the Next Verse How to Get It Back; He Said, "*Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and* (Listen) **DO THE DEEDS YOU DID AT FIRST** (E...I Want You to Notice That This Involved Actions)**
- > **Now, We Can Apply All of This to Our Marriages by Recalling What Mary Said to the Servants at the Wedding Feast in *John 2:5*; She Said, "...*Whatever He says* (Referring to Jesus) *to you, do it.*"**
- > **I Love That Phrase, Because Listen, I Think We Have More Than Enough Spiritual Information in Our Day About How to Have a Successful Marriage But Not Enough Action Based on Love (Can I Get a Witness?)**

T.S. 1) Love is Greater Than Speech
2) Love is Greater Than Scholarship
3) Love is Greater Than Sacrifice

vs 3 (Read)

- > Sacrifice, as I Pointed Out in My Introduction, is the Best Action Word That Can be Used to Describe Love; But Even So, It Cannot be Used to Define Love
- > Sacrifice is Often a Manifestation of Love, But It Cannot be Used to Define Love, Because It is Possible for a Person to Make Sacrifices That are Not Based on Love
- > In Fact, the Word “Give” That is Used Here Literally Means “*To Dole Out in Small Quantities*”
- > So, Here is a Person Who Makes It His Habit in Life to be Generous and to do Random Acts of Kindness
- > And Then, He Goes Beyond That and Gives ALL of His Possessions to the Poor and Even Sacrifices His Life; Yet, All of This is Worthless, Because It is Not Based on Love
- > The Prophet Micah Made This Same Point in *Micah 6:7-8* When He Said This; He Said, “*7 Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*”

Pt = God Doesn’t Want Meaningless Sacrifices (Elaborate); the Thing God Wants Most is for Us to Love Him; in Fact, This is What Jesus Called the Greatest Commandment

- > God Wants Us to Walk Humbly With Him, to Love Him and to Obey Him, and the Same is True About Our Spouse and Our Children
- > In Fact, I’ve Heard Husbands Say Things Like This “*I Don’t Understand What Her Problem is; I Have Provided Her With Everything That She Could Possibly Need*” (E... = No You Haven’t...Because She Also Needs Your Time and Your Affection)
- > And I’ve Heard Parents Says “*I Don’t Understand Why This Child of Mine is Giving Me so Much Trouble I Have Given Him Everything He Could Possibly Want*” (E... = No You Haven’t...Because He Also Wants Your Time and Your Affection)

T.S. I. Agape Love Should be Our Priority

II. Agape Love Contains These Properties

- > Now, in These Next Five Verses, Paul Tells Us Three Things; He Tells Us What This Love Is, What This Love is Not, and What This Love Does

1) What This Love Is

vs 4a (Read)

- > He Says This Love is “*Patience*” & “*Kind*,” and I Believe That These Two go Together
- > For You See, the Word “*Patience*” Describes an Attitude and the Word “*Kindness*” Describes an Action
 - a. This First Word “*Patience*” is a Compound Word in the Greek
 - > It is the Word “*Macrothumia*”; “*Macro*” Literally Means “*Long*,” and “*Thumia*” Literally Means “*Hot*”
 - > So, He is Saying, in Essence, That Agape Love Has a Long Fuse; It Does Not Seek to Retaliate; It is Longsuffering, and It Always Has a Desire to Forgive
 - > Our Lord, of Course, is Our Supreme Example of This Which is Why the Apostle Peter Said This in 2 Peter 3:9; He Said, “*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*”
 - > Our Lord, for Example, Put Up With My Unrestrained Rebellion for Almost Eighteen Years
 - > During Those Early Years of My Life, I Never Thanked Him for a Meal; I Took His Name in Vain Quite Frequently, and I Ridiculed Christians Etcetera
 - > But Nevertheless, Our Lord Continued to Love Me, and He Waited Patiently for Me to Come Around and to Start Reciprocating His Love – That’s Agape Love
 - > A Person, by Way of Contrast, Who Rushes Over to a Divorce Court, Because He or She Wants to Unload an Unwanted Mate as Quickly as They Possibly Can is Obviously Not Exhibiting This Characteristic of Agape Love

T.S. a. The First Word “*Patience*” is a Compound Word in the Greek

b. This Second Word “*Kindness*” Describes “*Taking the Initiative to Meet a Need*”

- > Again, God is Our Supreme Example; Because in *Romans 2:4*, Paul Gave Us This Rhetorical Question; He Said,

“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”

- > You See, Listen, God Has Sought to Win Us Over, Not by Being Cruel to Us, But Rather, by Showering Us With His Kindness
 - > He Doesn't Give Evil Men and Women What They Deserve; if He Did That, We'd Have a Lot of Greasy Spots on the Sidewalk
 - > Instead, He Gives Them Common Grace; Things Like: a House to Live In, and Food to Eat, and a Good Mind, and a Good Job, and the Beauty of the Earth
 - > For You See, He is Hoping That Some Day This Evil Man or Woman Will Begin to Realize That He is Really a Good and Kind God
 - > And Listen, God Wants Us to Follow His Example in Our Marriage Which is Why the Apostle Peter Said What He Did in *1 Peter 3:8-9*
 - > I Want You to Look at These Verses With Me That Come Right After a Section Dealing With How a Believing Spouse Should Treat an Unbelieving Spouse
 - > Peter Said This; He Said, *"8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; (Listen) 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead..."*
 - > The Natural Thing, and the Easy Thing for Us to do, is to Return an Insult for Insult
 - > But the Supernatural Thing for Us to do, and the Loving Thing for Us to do, is to Offer a Blessing Instead
 - > And I Can Tell You by Experience That This a Great Way to Resolve a Marital Conflict, Because It Really Takes Two to Tango (Perhaps, I Should Say *"Tangle"*)
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III: Jay Adams, in His Book Entitled *"The Christian Counselor's Manual"* Tells of a Deacon Who Came to a Preacher and Said,

"I know you're gonna hate to hear this, but my wife and I don't love each other anymore. We're thinking about getting a divorce"

- > The Preacher Said, *"Well, I'm really disappointed to hear that, but you're going have to love her because you're a Christian and the Bible commands us as Husbands to love our wives even as Christ loved the church..."*

- > The Deacon Said, *“Well, I’m going to be honest with you Preacher. I can’t love her, because all of our feeling is gone; we have no attraction to each other at all”*
- > The Preacher Said, *“Well, let’s go to a lower level of the Bible then, because the Bible says ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ and your wife is your closest neighbor; so, you’re going to have to love her.”*
- > The Deacon Said, *“Well, I’m going to be real honest with you Preacher. I despise her. I hate the way she talks. I can’t stand the way she disciplines the kids. She turns me off by the way she acts, and I hate the way she looks. I despise her”*
- > The Preacher Said, *“Well, I hate to hear that but you’re going to have go down to a lower level then, because the Bible commands us to love our enemies”*
- > The Deacon Said, *“Well, how in the world can I do that?”*
- > The Preacher Said, *“Well, first you’re going to have to understand that the love you’re thinking about is a feeling. That’s not the Biblical form of love; that’s Hollywood’s concept of love. That’s romance. What I’m talking about is doing the right thing for her even though you don’t feel like it. I suggest that you make a list of all of the things you would do if you were madly in love with her and do them anyway”*
- > The Deacon Said, *“I couldn’t do that; that’s hypocritical”*
- > The Preacher Said, *“No, that’s not hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is acting contrary to the way you believe, not to the way you feel. That’s obedience. Jesus said, ‘This is love for God that we obey Him. And when a Christian does the right thing regardless of feeling the emotion eventually comes back.’”*

T.S. 1) What This Love Is

2) What This Love is Not

vs 4b-6 (Read)

a. Love is Not Jealous

- > Jealousy, by the Way, is Not a Harmless Attitude; in *Proverbs 27:4*, Solomon Said, *“Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, but who can stand before jealousy?”*
- > And if Jealousy Gets Into a Church, It Can Cause Some Terrible Problems, That is Why James, the Half-Brother of Our Lord, Said This in *James 3:16*; He Said,

“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exists, there is disorder and every evil thing”

- > **Spiritual Jealousy, for Example, is What Caused Cain to Kill His Own Brother Abel, and His Jealousy Started at a Worship Service**
- > **Jonathan, by Way of Contrast, Loved David so Much That He Never Became Jealous of David’s Accomplishments**
- > **And This is Truly Amazing Since Jonathan Was the Son of King Saul, and a Rival for the Throne**

b. Love is Not Proud

- > **For the Sake of Time, I Will Take the Word “Proud” and the Word “Brag” Together Under the Heading of Pride, Because They are Very Closely Related**
- > **This Word “Brag” – “Per-peru-omai” Lit. Means “to Parade Your Accomplishments,” and the Word “Pride” – “Phu-See-Oh” Means “To be Inflated” or “Puffed Up”**
- > **So, This is Pride in the Negative Sense, and It Will do Three Things for You**
 - i. First, It Will Produce Conflict**
 - > **In Prov 13:10, Solomon Said, “By pride comes nothing but strife,...” (NKJV)**
 - > **So, You Can Mark It Down, When You Find Quarreling and Conflicts; Pride is Usually at the Root of It All**
 - > **And Love, of Course, Produces the Opposite of That; Love Produces Harmony**
 - ii. Second, It Will Prevent Intimacy**
 - > **Pride Will Prevent Intimacy, Because a Person Who is Proud Can Never Really Get Close to Anyone Else**
 - > **So, a Proud Person Refuses to Open Up, and the Actual Reason That They are Unwilling to do This is Because Deep Down They are Afraid of Rejection**
 - iii. Third, It Will Postpone Reconciliation**
 - > **Mark Twain Used to Say “It’s our temper that gets us into trouble, and it’s our pride that keeps us there”**

- > There Was a Movie That Came Out Way Back in 1970; So, I Know This is Really Going to Date Me; the Stars Were Ryan O Neal and Ali McGraw
- > The Popular Phrase That Came Out of That Movie Was This One; the Phrase Was *“Love is Never Having to Say You’re Sorry”* (Can Any of You Remember?)
- > Well, Listen, I Think That is the Most Ridiculous Thing I Have Ever Heard
- > For You See, My Bible Says That Love is Humble; and Therefore, True Love Definitely Says *“I’m Sorry”* When This What is Needed to Restore a Relationship

c. Love is Not Rude

- > That is What This Phrase *“Does Not Act Unbecomingly Refers To”*; the Root Word Means *“To Court”* or Literally *“To Act Courteously”* (E...= King’s Court)
- > And There is a Great Example of This in *Luke 7:44-46* That Involved an Immoral Woman and a Man Named Simon Who Was a Pharisee (E...)

d. Love is Not Selfish

- > Someone Has Said That, if We Could Remove Selfishness From the Human Race, We Could Replant the Garden of Eden, and I Agree

e. Love is Not Irritable

- > And This Word Literally Means to be *“Touchy”* or *“Easily Offended”*; Peter Tells Us That Jesus, by Way of Contrast *“...while being reviled, He (Jesus) did not revile in return; (and) while suffering, He uttered no threats, ...”* (1 Pet 2:23)

III: I Laughed When I Came Across a True Story That Took Place at the Passion Play in Eureka Springs Arkansas Many Years Ago

- > As a Local Man, Playing the Part of Jesus Was Carrying His Cross Through the Streets, a Heckler Began to Harass Him From the Sidelines
- > He Became so Irritated That He Shocked the Crowd by Dropping the Cross, Storming Over to the Heckler and Punching Him
- > The Next Day, the Same Heckler Showed Up to Harass the Man Playing Jesus; and Finally, He Couldn’t Stand It so He Dropped the Cross Again, Lunged Towards the Man and He Had to be Physically Restrained
- > The Third Day, the Man Playing Jesus Tried Not to React, But the Heckler Kept It Up Until Finally the Man Playing the Part of Jesus Glared at Him Clinched His Fist in Anger and Said, *“I’ll Meet You After the Resurrection!”*

f. Love is Not Limited

- > This Phrase *“Does Not Take Into Account a Wrong Suffered”* is Actually an Accounting Term That Refers to Keeping a Ledger
 - > Peter, on One Occasion, Said to Jesus, *“How Many Times Should I Forgive My Brother, Seven Times?”*, and He Thought He Was Being Magnanimous
 - > But Jesus Said, *“No, Seventy Times Seven”* and He Didn’t Mean 490 Times; He Meant an Unlimited Number of Times (Matt 18:21-22)
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Quip = One Man Was Talking to Another Man and He Said, *“My Wife Got Historical Last Night”* (E...His Friend Said “You Meant Hysterical” No, I Meant “Historical”...)

g. Love is Not Indignant

- > This is What I Believe Paul is Referring to When He Said That Love Does Not Rejoice About Unrighteousness
 - > In *Prov 24:17*, Solomon Said, *“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles”*
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T.S. Well, That’s What This Love Is and What This Love is Not

3) What This Love Does

vs 7-8a (Read)

a. It Covers

- > This is What the Word “Bear” Means; It Means *“To Cover”*; *“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another,...”* Peter Says *“...because love covers a multitude of sins”* (1 Peter 4:8)
- > By the Way, This is Exactly the Opposite of Gossip or Slander, Because Gossip or Slander Takes Delight in Revealing the Faults and Shortcomings of Others

b. It Lasts

- > Paul Says That *“Love Never Fails”*

Q.n = What Does That Mean?

Ans = It Means That It Works

Verse 13 (Read)

-> Prophecy, Tongues and Knowledge Will Cease, Paul Says, But Agape Love Will Abide

Q.n = What Does That Mean?

Ans = That It Will Last

Q.n = Isn't That Encouraging to Hear in This Day and Time When so Many Marriages are Ending in Divorce?

Ans = Agape Love is Something That Will Last

-> Finally, I Need to Tell You That This Kind of Love is Impossible; It is Impossible for You and I to Produce It in Our Own Strength, But God Can Produce It in Us

-> And That is Why the Apostle Paul Said This in *Romans 5:5*; He Said, "...*the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*"

-> So, First, You Must Know Jesus as Your Personal Lord and Savior; and Then, He Will Empower You to be Able to Love Other People Like This (Invitation)