



Dear Crossroads Family,

Almost every Christian knows the Greek word, *agape*. It is certainly one of the most important words in the New Testament. Biblical writers chose *agape* to describe the kind of love God has for His people. In 1 Corinthians 12-13, Paul says that *agape* is “the most excellent way” for believers to live. Surprisingly, however, *agape* was a rarely used, rather “colorless” word in the common Greek language of 1st century.

In 1st century Greek, other words for “love” were more popular. If you wanted to describe deep friendship, you used *philia*. If you meant romantic passion, you used *eros*. If you meant family affection, you used *storge*. In secular texts, *agape* simply meant "to be fond of" a particular food or to "greet someone with affection."

The biggest shift for *agape* happened about 200–300 years before the New Testament, when Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek. They needed a word to translate the Hebrew word '*ahabah* (love). They likely avoided *eros* because it felt too "lustful" or tied to Greek deities. They chose *agape* as a sort of "neutral" vessel that they could fill with the meaning of “self-giving love”— an intense, elective, and giving passion based solely on the choice of the lover to love. So, by the 1st century, *agape* was already becoming a "religious" word for Jews, even if secular Greeks weren't using it that way.

The authors of the New Testament took a word that was vague and rare and repurposed it to describe the "essence" of God—“God is love.” If they had used *philia*, people would have thought God was just a "really good friend." If they had used *eros*, they would have thought of a "needy passion." By using *agape*, they were able to define a new category of love: a love that isn't a reaction to how attractive the object is, but a love that flows out of the nature of the lover.

There you have it—everything (and probably a lot more than) you always wanted to know about the word *agape*. It isn't the word that matters, however. It is the fact that God loves you with this kind of love, and only He has the capacity to love you and me like that. His kind of love is the example for which we should strive to love one another, but only He is capable of perfect *agape* love.

Aren't you glad He is your God and you are His child!

Let's talk about it Sunday morning. It will be a wonderful, uplifting topic (even after we have set our clocks forward one hour and lost an hour of sleep. Good Grief! When are they gonna make this change permanent?).

See you Sunday. (Sermon notes are provided below.)

Agape,

Bro. Doug

How to Look More Like Jesus

1 John 4:7-19

Possibly the most important and consequential descriptive statement about God in all of Scripture is this: “_____.” It is a testament to Who God ____, not just what He _____. He loves, of course, but He loves because love is Who He is. Love is His _____.

John says we can verify his assertion about God by looking at what He has _____. “He sent His Son into the world as an atoning sacrifice for our sins that we might live through Him.” Jesus’ action perfectly _____ real love. It isn’t a mere _____ or sentiment. Nor is it a self-_____ activity. It is self-sacrificing--done purely for the benefit of the thing loved.

John penned this phrase to address a pressing problem. People who once claimed faith in Jesus had _____ from Jesus and John’s church (see **1 John 2:19**). Those still in the church were fearful that maybe they too were not truly saved. After all, the people who left said they had received Jesus. What _____ could they look for to see if they were really born of God and knew God? John’s answer: “let us love one another, for love comes _____. Like Jesus, Christians are repeatedly called to lay down their lives for one another by meeting the physical needs of others through _____ with one another and by meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of others by _____ with one another and _____ one another.

But being born of God and knowing God doesn’t make love _____. It enables us to love as He loves. We must be _____ about our love for one another. It must be cultivated.

As Christ-followers, we are called to a self-giving, self-denying love for one another. Since God is love, love is God’s nature, but it _____ in our nature. Enabled by God’s _____ within us, however, we can _____ loving one another, helping, forgiving, building up one another, until His kind of love becomes _____ to us.

A Few Announcements:

Time for some Irish Fun with Young at Heart! Join in the fun on Thursday, March 12, at 11:30 am in the Fellowship Hall. The guest speaker will be Kim Bose, who will share information about Ornithery, which is the intentional practice of observing birds for mental health. Baked potatoes will be provided! You can bring your favorite potato topping or dessert. We will also play a few rounds of Irish BINGO!

Baptism Sunday on March 15: There are some baptisms scheduled for March 15. If you have made a Profession of Faith and are interested in baptism, contact the church office to be added to the service.

Women of Prayer Potluck Picnic Luncheon will be Monday, March 16, at 11:30 am in the Fellowship Hall. Bring something you might take on a picnic to share with the group. The guest speaker will be Carol Fisher, speaking on “God’s Peace in a Broken World.” Please RSVP to Gail Anderson (210.863.5254).

Crossroads VBS 2026: Illumination Station is coming soon! Mark your calendar for June 15-19, 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. All children who have completed PK to 6th grade can take part in VBS this summer. Registration can be found at cbcsa.net/vbs.

Join in VBS Fun! **Illumination Station Kickoff & Training** will be Saturday, March 28, from 9:00 am to noon in the Fellowship Hall. Find your VBS Team! Enjoy VBS Snacks! Be encouraged and energized to make this VBS fabulous! RSVP to Chelsay Long, VBS Director (703.814.2990) or Katy Padgett, Children’s Director (757.660.4669).