

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, May 1, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“Authentic Love”

Various Scripture, 1 Corinthians 13

To how many people in your life can you publicly say “I love you”? Some would have to admit, to their own embarrassment, that if they were counting on one hand, they would have fingers left uncounted. We might say, “I’m not a people-hater, I just don’t gush all over them!” or something like, “Well, I grew up in a family that didn’t show a lot of emotion or shows of affection!” Oh, but those things may not be, necessarily, the greatest enemy of love. Not being able to say it, “I love you,” with words may not be the greatest enemy of love, although certainly expressing your love for others with words is important. This may surprise you, but even hate may not necessarily be the greatest enemy of love. One man described it best when he identified love’s greatest enemy as “apathy.” Not caring, ignoring another person, callously conducting our own lives as if others don’t even exist, being so self-absorbed that we are really indifferent or oblivious to the needs of others and without care for others... these make the wordless yet stinging statement, “I do not love you.” Toward whom are you apathetic? Perhaps you need the following reminders as much as the rest of us. You see, love truly can make a difference in this world. Not “love” as the world often defines it, but a divine “God” kind of love that can really impact the life of another and bring real and lasting change. If God’s love can change the heart of man... and it can, we certainly must be conduits of that love than can truly make a difference.

I. WHAT KIND OF LOVE ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The world’s view of love can be very skewed. As a matter of fact, the world’s idea of love, or at least the one we see most often display and conveyed by the world does have an impact, but not the one we would desire. The way the world looks at love and set about expressing it often leads to pain, heartache and often abuse.

The world’s view of love – List some words that you would say describe the way the world views love:

lust
strong like
emotional bond

infatuation
love at first sight
sex

a fleeting feeling
passion
fluctuating feeling

**The world says things like, “If you really loved me you would...”, or “I just don’t feel in love with you anymore...”, or will express this feeling for things like, “I love hot dogs,*

baseball and apple pie!” The world’s love often is a very fluctuating and fleeting thing... very fickle, on again off again kind of emotion. Perhaps that is why, in this world love, seems to so often fail... marriages fall apart, and relationships fail. This kind of love seems less than “authentic” because if so often fails and falls short.

The New Testament worlds view of love:

4 Kind of Love in Greek:

1. **Eros = Marital/Sexual Love** – Love between a husband and wife. We get our English word “erotic” love from this word because it refers to sex and the sexual relationship that exist between husband and wife.
2. **Storge = Family Love** - Refers to love in the family relationship... love between a parent and child, or between brothers and sister, family kin, etc.
3. **Philia = Friend/Brotherly Love** - Love that exists between friends. This Greek word literally means “brotherly love” and is the word for which the U.S. city of Philadelphia gets its name. The city of Philadelphia is also called “The City of Brotherly Love.”
4. **Agape = Unconditional love**

2 Words of Love NOT in the Bible: 2 of the above listed words for love appear in the Bible and 2 do not. See if you can guess which 2 are not in the Bible and which two are used in the Bible.

1. **Eros**
2. **Storge**

2 Words for Love in the Bible:

1. **Philia**
2. **Agape**

Which of the follow 2 types of love, found in the Bible, describe God’s divine love? Place a check [✓] beside the appropriate response.

[] **Philia**

[] **Agape**

NOTE: While each of these are legitimate expressions of love in marriage, within a family, and among friends if they are not motivated out of authentic agape love they will fall short of really having the kind of life changing impact we are talking about.

II. WHAT DOES AUTHENTIC LOVE REALLY LOOK LIKE

KEY STATEMENT: Authentic love looks like God’s agape love!

3 Characteristics of God’s Love: God’s love has many facets or characteristics, but listen as the following three familiar verses are read (or quoted) and see if you can’t name 3 of those characteristics based on these three verses or passages.

1. **God's love is giving (John 3:16)** - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*
2. **God's love is sacrificial (Roman 5:8)** - *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
3. **God's love is unending (Romans 8:37-39)** - *"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Characteristics of "Agape" Love or Divine/God Love:

- (1) Agape is the word for love most rarely used by the Greeks.
- (2) Agape is the most commonly used word for love in the New Testament.
- (3) Agape is used to describe unconditional love. Love that says "no matter what you do I'm going to keep loving you!"
- (4) Agape is the highest form of love in the Greek language.
- (5) Agape pictures the deepest kind of commitment. This is committed love.
- (6) Agape is used in the New Testament to describe God's divine love.
- (7) Agape is an authentic love that really does impact the lives of those around us.
- (8) Agape was/is most accurately demonstrated in Jesus.

If authentic love and an accurate picture of it can most clearly be seen in Jesus, we must ask ourselves what does that look like so that we may imitate it. Paul essentially addresses this in Ephesians 5:1-2. Listen to his words, *"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* Do you see it? We are to be imitators of God's divine love exhibited in Jesus Christ. We need look no further than Jesus to see what an "authentic" love that can make a difference looks like:

Characteristics of the Love Jesus Exhibited:

1. **A love for enemies – Matthew 5:43-48,** ⁴³ *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*
2. **A love for the disenfranchised – Matthew 9:35-38,** ³⁵ *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. ³⁶ But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary^[b] and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. ³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸ Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."*

3. **A love for those in need – Matthew 20:29-34,** *“²⁹ Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. ³⁰ And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” ³¹ Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” ³² So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³³ They said to Him, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.” ³⁴ So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.”*
4. **A love that was willing to be empty of self – Philippians 2:1-8,** *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*
5. **A love that was willing to die for others - John 15:13,** *“¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”*
6. **A love that transcends words - 1 John 3:16-18,** *“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. ¹⁷ But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him.¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*
7. **A love that never lets go – Romans 8:35-39,** *“³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” ³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
8. **A love that never fails – 1 Corinthians 13:8 & 13,** *“⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away... ¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”* **And Ephesians 3:17-19,** *“¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

III. HOW DOES AUTHENTIC LOVE MAKE A DIFFERENCE? FOUR PRINCIPLES OF LOVE (1 Corinthians 13)

Paul teaches us what it means to say “I love you.” His counsel fits any situation involving another person... mate, neighbor, boss, or family member. It even involves the casual stranger you may come across in your daily path. This text does not cry out to be analyzed or dissected; it merely needs to be dispensed. To pick it apart would ruin it. As you read the words that Paul wrote, keep in mind an obvious statement written across the entire thirteenth chapter:

“If I do not relate to other in love, I do not relate to others at all!”
–Dr. Charles Swindoll

“¹Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ²And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. ⁴Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. ¹³And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”–1 Corinthians 13 (NKJV)

Let’s now look at the principles of love that can be derived from this passage.

4 Principles of Love from the Love Chapter:

- 1. Love is essential, not optional (vv.1-3)** – Congregations need love. Pastors need a love relationship with their flocks. Husbands and wives, parents and children, bosses and employees, fellow members of the Christian faith all need to be loved and to express love. Remove love and life is reduced to a grinding, irksome, friction-filled list of demands, requirements, and sterile assignments. We’re not to simply think about loving... we are to actively and aggressively express it!
- 2. Love is demonstrated, not an inclination (vv.4-5a)** – Indifference may not be illegal, but it is immoral. To turn away in apathy when we see someone else in need shows irresponsible behavior. Paul describes love as an exhibition which at times includes restraint of natural tendencies. In the text we are told that love is patient, kind, lacking in jealousy, refusing to brag or display arrogance. It does not act unbecomingly. Love is a reaching experience that expresses itself in giving to others.
- 3. Love is a magnet that draws people together and never separates (vv.4-8a)** – Love has drawing power. We find Christians separated from each other and their relationships impaired, we know that love’s bridge has been torn down. Paul continues his instruction by saying that love “does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own,

is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered.” When our relationships break down, neither positive thinking nor human manipulation can rescue them: only love can. God’s love, Christ’s love flowing through His children. What does love say that draws people together and makes such a difference? Five things that we’ll call “Love’s ABC’s:

Love’s ABC’s... 5 Things Loves Does That Make a Difference:

- (1) Love says, “I accept you as you are.” –
- (2) Love says, “I believe you are valuable.” –
- (3) Love says, “I care when you hurt.” –
- (4) Love says, “I desire what is best for you.” –
- (5) Love says, “I erase all offenses.” -

4. **Love is a long-term investment, not a quick-return loan (vv.7-8, 13)** – “Love is patient... endures... never fails... abides...” Love has roots, tentacles that reach so tightly around the other person that nothing can loosen that grip.

IV. FINAL PERSPECTIVES ON LOVE (1 John 4:7-20)

Toward the end of the New Testament we have some timely words from the Disciple whom Jesus loved, John, on love and it’s truest expressions... what it looks like and what it does in our life. John’s talking about authentic love and its ability to change us, but not only change us but change our world. Authentic love is like a multi-faceted diamond. If you hold that diamond up and begin to turn it and closely examine it you will soon discover many exquisite qualities and nuances to the gem. Love likewise has many perspectives, nuances and views to add to our lives and those around us. It really can make a difference. Let’s look at these closing thoughts and consider 9 Biblical perspectives on authentic love.

9 Biblical Perspectives on Authentic Love:

1. **Love for the believer is not an option, but is commanded – (v.7)** ⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*
2. **Love is the truest expression of God in our lives – (vv.7-8)** ⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.* ⁸ *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”.*
3. **Love was shown to us through Jesus Christ – (vv.9-10)** ⁹ *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.* ¹⁰ *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*
4. **Love shown to us should also be extended through us – (v.11)** ¹¹ *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*
5. **Love shown through us gives a clear picture to the world and others of who God is – (vv. 12-14)** ¹² *No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.* ¹³ *By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.* ¹⁴ *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.”*

6. **Love ties us closely to God in relationship and gives us hope – (vv.15-17)** ¹⁵
Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.”
7. **Love frees us and gives us courage to live in victory – (v.18)** ¹⁸
“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”
8. **Love, to be authentic, must be God love – (v.19)** ¹⁹
“We love Him because He first loved us.”
9. **Love spoken is not enough, it must be shown to others – (vv.20-21)** ²⁰
“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”