

Introduction:

We have looked at John's 8 specific purpose statements.

1. **Belief** that leads to eternal life brings peace
2. **Joy** in fellowship with God and His Son brings peace
3. **Victory** through an advocate brings peace
4. **Clarity** about the new law brings peace
5. **Forgiveness** brings peace
6. To **Know** God intimately brings peace
7. To **Overcome** the evil one brings peace
8. **Assurance** of eternal life brings peace

It is important to remember that these are not independent statements that stand alone. They are all small pieces to a larger picture of the Christian life. In his writings John gives details that help us understand the Christian life from different points of view and from different perspectives.

When you study John's writings you begin to see key words that point to important teachings. The word love is one of those key words. For example in all of the New Testament the word love is used in 226 verses. In his gospel account John uses the word love in 39 verses, and in his Epistles he uses love in 32 verses. In all of John's writings he uses the word love in 79 verses. That means that 35% of the verses in the New Testament that have the word love in them were written by John. That's more than one third of them. I said all that to let you know that the word love was important to John.

So I would say it is important to understand Love as it is used in the New Testament:

There are two Greek words used in the New Testament for our word love. - **agape(o)** and **phileo**

g26 agape (noun) and g25 agapao (verb) - is used in 31 verses in John's gospel account but in John's epistles it is used in 32 verses, and in 1John 4 it is used 27 times in 12 verses. I think John was trying to say something about agape love in 1John 4.

g5368 - phileo is used in 10 verses in the Gospel of John but never in John's epistles.

Let's look at how John uses agape love in his first epistle. Remember, John never uses phileo love in his epistles, but he uses agape 27 times in 12 verses in...

1 John 4:7-21 (NIV)

[7] Dear friends, let us **love** one another, for **love** comes from God. Everyone who **loves** has been born of God and knows God. [8] Whoever does not **love** does not know God, because God is **love**. [9] This is how God showed his **love** among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. [10] This is **love**: not that we **loved** God, but that he **loved** us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (This is agape love, to love an enemy. This is not the affection of God but the character of God. His character demands that He love us in spite of our sin. This is God's attitude toward sinful mankind. He loves us so He acts to restore a

relationship with us even though we have rebelled against Him.) [11] Dear friends, since God so **loved** us, we also ought to **love** one another. (We are to love one another in the same manner and with the same kind of love that God loved us.) [12] No one has ever seen God; but if we **love** one another, God lives in us and his **love** is made complete in us. [13] We know that we live 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 his Son to be the Savior of the world. (This is the action of God's agape love.) [15] If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. [16] And so we know and rely on the **love** God has for us. God is **love**. Whoever lives in **love** lives in God, and God in him. [17] In this way, **love** is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. [18] There is no fear in **love**. But perfect **love** drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in **love**. [19] We **love** because he first **loved** us. [20] If anyone says, "I **love** God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not **love** his brother, whom he has seen, cannot **love** God, whom he has not seen. [21] And he has given us this command: Whoever **loves** God must also **love** his brother.

Understanding Love in the New Testament seems to be overwhelming sometimes, especially when one reads this passage from 1John 4. It helps to understand what John is talking about when he uses agape love instead of phileo love.

So what is the difference between these two Greek words for love? (**agape(o)** and **phileo**)

g26 agape (noun); **g25 agapao** (verb) - To love, to regard with strong affection. As referring to superiors and including the idea of duty, respect, veneration, meaning to love and serve with fidelity. (obedience) Used

sub-stan-tive-ly of those loving the Lord, meaning faithful disciples or followers of the Lord. Sub-stan-tive-ly in that this is not just a feeling but an action that is beyond feelings or emotions thus making it substantive.

Agape - To esteem, love, indicating a direction of the will and finding one's joy in something or someone. It differs from

g5368 phileo – love of a person, to have affection for someone, with Christian love; love of things, to be fond of something, to like something

Phileo, to love, indicating feelings, warm affection, the kind of love expressed by a kiss.

(Perhaps **agape** would be what we might sometimes describe as tough love. **Phileo** would be what we might describe as intimate love, passion, or affection.) dgb

Love in Vines NT dictionary:

A. Verbs.

1. **agapao (G25)** and the corresponding noun agape (B, No. 1 below) present "the characteristic word of Christianity, and since the Spirit of revelation has used it to express ideas previously unknown, inquiry into its use, whether in Greek literature or in the Septuagint, throws but little light upon its distinctive meaning in the NT. Cf, however, Lev_19:18; Deu_6:5.

"Agape and agapao are used in the NT (a) to describe the attitude of God toward His Son, Joh_17:26; the human race, generally, Joh_3:16; Rom_5:8, and to such as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ particularly Joh_14:21; (b) to convey His will to His children concerning their attitude one toward another, Joh_13:34, and toward all men, 1Th_3:12; 1Co_16:14; 2Pe_1:7; (c) to express the essential nature of God, 1Jo_4:8.

"Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son,

1Jo_4:9, 1Jo_4:10. But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection (If God were acting on the love that is based on affection, phileo, He could never have allowed Jesus to endure the cross. dgb) , But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, Rom_5:8. It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause (like affection) save that which lies in the nature of God Himself, Cf. Deu_7:7, Deu_7:8.

"Love had its perfect expression among men in the Lord Jesus Christ, 2Co_5:14; Eph_2:4; Eph_3:19; Eph_5:2; Christian love is the fruit of His Spirit in the Christian, Gal_5:22.

"Christian love has God for its primary object, and expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to His commandments, Joh_14:15, Joh_14:21, Joh_14:23; Joh_15:10; 1Jo_2:5; 1Jo_5:3; 2Jo_1:6. Selfwill, that is, self-pleasing, is the negation of love to God. (Jesus said you can only have one master, God or self.)

"Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, Rom_15:2, and works no ill to any, Rom_13:8-10; love seeks opportunity to do good to 'all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith,' Gal_6:10. See further 1 Corinthians 13 and Col_3:12-14."*

* From Notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, p. 105.

In respect of agapao as used of God, it expresses the deep and constant "love" and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects, producing and fostering a reverential "love" in them towards the Giver, and a practical "love" towards those who are partakers of the same, and a desire to help others to seek the Giver. See BELOVED. (This is seen in...)

Matthew 5:43-48 (NIV)

[43] "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [46] If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? [47] And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? [48] Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

2. phileo (G5368) is to be distinguished from agapao in this, that phileo more nearly represents "tender affection." (This might help explain forgiveness. It might be hard to understanding forgiveness if I am trying to understand it from the standpoint of phileo love instead of agape love. We may feel like we have not truly forgiven someone unless we have the feelings of tender affection like phileo. But in reality what is required is agape love, or love that - obviously is not the love of affection, that is, it is not drawn out by any excellency in its objects. (This answers the question, "How can I love someone who has hurt me.") It is an exercise of the (human will aligned with the) divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself. This is obedience to the command of God not a good or affectionate feeling toward an enemy. This is what it means to love our enemy. Mt. 5:44 "Love (agape) your enemies..." Matthew 5:43-48 (NIV) [43] "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on

the righteous and the unrighteous. [46] If you **love** those who **love** you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? [47] And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? [48] Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The two words are used for the "love" of the Father for the Son, Joh_3:35 (No. 1), and Joh_5:20 (No. 2); for the believer, Joh_14:21 (No. 1) and Joh_16:27 (No. 2); both, of Christ's "love" for a certain disciple, Joh_13:23 (No. 1), and Joh_20:2 (No. 2). Yet the distinction between the two verbs remains, and they are never used indiscriminately in the same passage; if each is used with reference to the same objects, as just mentioned, each word retains its distinctive and essential character.

Phileo is never used in a command to men to "love" God; it is, however, used as a warning in 1Co_16:22; **agapao** is used (for the love man is to have for God) **instead**, e.g., Mat_22:37; Luk_10:27; Rom_8:28; 1Co_8:3; 1Pe_1:8; 1Jo_4:21. See also Trench, Syn., Sec.xii.

In premarital counseling I try to help young couples understand that the feelings they have for each other right now will not be constant. They will one day ask themselves the question, "Why on earth did I marry this person?" or they may say something like, "What have I gotten myself into, I had no idea this person was like this?" What they are expressing at that moment is the reality of the absence of the love of affection which is based on feelings and emotions. That kind of love goes up and down depending on circumstances at any given time. This is phileo love, love based on affection. The problem with affection is that it is fickle. What couples need to understand is that their marriage must have agape love as well as phileo love or it will not survive. We must be able to love our spouse when they momentarily seem to be an enemy to us. This is love (agape) as **an exercise of (the human will aligned with) the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself**. This is why marriage can only be truly secure in a loving (agape) relationship with each other and God. I would like to propose that the reason the divorce rate in the church is the same as that of the world is because many people do not fully understand that their love must be multifaceted. We are drawn together by affection, phileo love, and can stay together only if both partners live out agape love in their marriage.

Some examples:

Agape(o)

- Jn 3.16 God so loved He gave His Son. He gave His one and only Son for sinful rebellious people. Not the action of affection or phileo love, but the action of agape love.
- Jn 3.19 men loved darkness, proven by their evil deeds. Anyone in the grip of sin, if they could be honest, would let you know that their love for sinfulness was not an affectionate kind of love.
- Jn 12.43 speaks of the love the Pharisees had for the approval of men rather than God. The people hated and despised the Pharisees, there was no affection for them.
- Jn 13.34-35; Jn 15.12-13, 17 Jesus' command for His disciples to love each other as He has loved them. It would never work if it was phileo love because phileo love is based on affectionate feelings and emotions that are constantly changing.
- Jn 11.5 the love (agape) Jesus had for Mary and Martha (Lazarus' sisters). Remember Jesus waited until Lazarus was dead before he came to them, not an act of affection.

Phileo

- Jn 11.3 the love (phileo) Jesus had for Lazarus. Remember he wept when he got to the gravesite. If Jesus had acted on His phileo love, His affection for Lazarus he would have rushed

to his side and healed him, but instead He let him die. His agape love for all of mankind in the plan God had for Him here on earth took priority over the phileo love He had for Lazarus.

- Jn 12:25 describes one who loves his own life but loses it, not willing to give what he will eventually lose for what he cannot lose.

The distinction between the two verbs finds a conspicuous instance in the narrative of Joh_21:15-17. The context itself indicates that agapao in the first two questions suggests the "love" that values and esteems (cf. Rev_12:11). It is an unselfish "love," ready to serve. The use of phileo in Peter's answers and the Lord's third question, conveys the thought of cherishing the Object above all else, of manifesting an affection characterized by constancy (or affection), from the motive of the highest veneration. In Jn 21:15-17 Jesus' has an encounter with Peter where the **agape(o)** and **phileo** are used together so we can see a practical example of the differences between these two words for love. But we must look at those verses in the context of Peter's relationship with Jesus over a period of some time. We know that Peter left his fishing business to follow Jesus. Peter was outspoken and forceful as a follower of Jesus, more so than the other 11 disciples.

Peter makes a commitment that comes from his love (phileo) for Jesus.

John 13:34-38 (NIV)

[34] "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. [35] By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

[36] Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

[37] Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

[38] Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"

Peter takes the action that proves his love (phileo) for Jesus.

John 18:3-11 (NIV)

[3] So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

[4] Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

[5] "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) [6] When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

[7] Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

[8] "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go."

[9] This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

[10] Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

[11] Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Jesus wants Peter to understand that Peter needs to have love (agape) that goes beyond the feelings and emotions.

John 21:4-19 (NIV)

[4] Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was

Jesus.

[5] He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

[6] He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

[7] Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. [8] The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. [9] When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

[10] Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

[11] Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. [12] Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. [13] Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. [14] This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

[15] When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

[16] Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

[17] The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. [18] I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." [19] Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

It is phileo love that Peter was feeling when he made a commitment to die with Christ if anything were to happen to Him. He meant every word of it. At that time, feeling a great amount of affection for Christ, Peter fully intended to use his sword to protect Jesus and even die for Jesus if necessary that night. Even in the garden he drew his sword out and started the battle to save Jesus from the mob that had come to arrest Him. Jesus grabs his arm and tells him to put his sword away. Then Jesus loves, agape, His enemy, picks up his ear and heals it. Now what happens to that kind of passionate affection when it is cast aside like that. It grows cold. Is it any wonder that just a few hours later Peter finds himself in the crowd denying that he even knows Jesus.

A few days later, the resurrected Lord asks Peter if he loves (agape) Him. Peter answers, Lord You know everything, You know I love (phileo) You. I took my sword out and tried to stop them, and You slapped me down and rejected my love (phileo) for You. You see as Jesus interacts with Peter after the resurrection he wants Peter to understand that he must love Jesus and His cause with agape love. The kind of love that is an exercise of (the human will aligned with) the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself.

*** It is only in this kind of agape love that Peter can lead the church that Jesus is placing in his care. Peter answers Jesus question do you love (agape) Me, with the statement, "I love (phileo) You." He would not fully understand what agape love would mean to him as a leader of the church and in his relationship with God until Pentecost. You see Peter, like most of us, thought that phileo love was the better love to express to Jesus. But in the long run it is agape love that will help us to have the kind of relationships God wants us to have with Him and with each other.

It took me a long time to understand this conversation between Jesus and Peter and their use of the two words for love. In the garden Jesus forced Peter to set aside his phileo love for Him by stopping Peter's attack. He did this so God's greater plan, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus could save the world. Now on the seashore Jesus questions Peter about his agape love for Him. Peter still does not fully understand. In the aftermath of his denial all Peter can think of is trying to let Jesus know that he loves (phileo) Him. Jesus last question to Peter, "do you love (phileo) Me," is Jesus trying to say, "if you love (phileo) me then you need to set aside that (phileo) love, and love me with agape love as you lead My church."

Knowing the difference between agape and phileo love can mean the difference between a marriage that easily weathers the storms of life instead of one that falls apart. Knowing the difference between agape and phileo love can prevent an up and down relationship with God that battles over what I want and what God knows is best for me. Knowing what God's agape love for me means can bring a steadfastness to my relationship with God that I have never know before. Knowing the difference between agape and phileo love can help me to understand God's command to love my enemy or forgive those who hurt me. Next week we will look a little further into New Testament love.