

Introduction: (Review Greek words for Love)

We have taken a 4 week break from our series on the writings of John to celebrate the Centennial of the Church of the Nazarene. When we took our break we were talking about the word love in John's writings. We learned that there are two Greek words for love?

agape (CWS-NT) – agape love is To love or 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 of those loving the Lord, meaning faithful disciples or followers of the Lord. This is not just a feeling but actions that go beyond feelings or emotions thus making it sub-stantive. To esteem, or love, indicating a direction of the will and finding one's joy in something or someone.

Most of the time when the New Testament talks about love it uses the word agape. Agape love is used in 207 verses in the New Testament. Another Greek word use for love is phileo. Phileo love is only used in 21 verses in the New Testament. There is an emphasis of Agape love that we need to understand. Agape love in the Body of Christ is "the kind of love that is an exercise of the human will, aligned with the divine will, in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause, or passion, or feelings, or affection except that which lies in the nature of God Himself." (CWS-NT) You and I can only have this kind of love if we have made the choice to follow Jesus Christ in our daily life. This takes a life changing experience where I do more than ask Christ to forgive me of my sins and deliver me from the guilt and punishment of sin. This takes the complete surrender of my will to His will in my daily life. Then and only then can I live out the kind of love God demands in His Kingdom.

One commentator in talking about the difference between agape and phileo love wrote...

Simply stated, to love (*agapáō*) fellow humans means to see or discern what their need is and to meet that need, not according to the object's concept of need, but that of the one who loves. It is in this concept that the saying of Christ in Mt 5:44, "love [*agapáte*] your enemies," can be understood. For a believer, his enemies are his enemies because they are not believers. What he sees is their need of faith and he must do everything that he can to meet that need in their lives in whatever manner. Believers are never told to love their enemies with the word *phileō* because that would mean to have the same interests as their enemies have. (CWS-NT)

phileo (CWS-NT) – Phileo love means one has a personal love for someone or they have affection for someone, like with Christian love. It can be used to indicate the love of a thing, or to be fond of something, to like something. It is to love, indicating feelings, and warm affection. This is the kind of love sometimes expressed by a kiss, when a kiss is appropriate. It also carries the idea of having the same interests as another.

The Word: (How is phileo used in the New Testament)

But what significance does this hold for you and I today?

What does the New Testament reveal to us about phileo love that is important for our spiritual lives in the 21st century?

The first reference to phileo love in the New Testament is found in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:5 (NIV)

[5] "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love (phileo) to pray standing in the

synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Phileo love is used in a negative way here. It speaks of the love (phileo) people have to be noticed by others. But out of context this verse does not give us much insight to the magnitude of the meaning of phileo love. We must look deeper into the context to understand what Jesus was trying to say here. Let's put it in the context of what Jesus is trying to communicate in this section of His great sermon.

Matthew 6:1-8 (NIV)

[6:1] "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, **to be seen by them**. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

[2] "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, **to be honored by men**. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. [3] But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, [4] so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

[5] "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they **love** (phileo) to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners **to be seen by men**. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. [6] But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [7] And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. [8] Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Notice the emphasis of recognition in these verses; in verse 1 "**to be seen by men**", in verse 2 "**to be honored by men**", and in verse 5 "**to be seen by men**". The context of what Jesus is trying to communicate about this kind of love (phileo) is that what we do for God, 'acts of righteousness', are for God. Our interests must be aligned with His interests not with the interests of onlookers. Note the proper emphasis stated in verses 4 and 6, "**your Father who sees what is done**". Jesus is trying to tell us that we should care more about what God sees and thinks of us than anyone on earth. Yet sin pulls us toward a warped awareness of righteousness. In sin, righteousness is seen as something that we **feel good** about when others see us doing it. We are captivated by the opinions of others.

The very idea of prayer is to wrap ourselves in the full interests of God. How horrific it must seem to God when we pray with the intention of trying to look righteous to those who may be watching us pray. Jesus is trying to communicate to His listeners, which include you and I, the importance of where our interests are focused. Phileo love is an expression of our interests, and when we pray or give to be seen by others we have our own self interests at heart instead of the interests of God. In this case phileo love is use in a negative illustration to help us see that our interests must lie with God not self.

In one of his Marmaduke cartoons Brad Anderson captures the idea of the modern version of self interest or self love and concern for the opinions of others. Marma has used his online MySpace to capture the attention of several pretty female dogs. Now we know they are pretty because they all have bows in their hair. Watching him stand at the window drooling at the lineup in the front yard, his owner asks him, "Just how did you describe yourself on your MySpace page?" How others perceive us, even in church circles, has become an obsession in our culture. Jesus wants us to know that it is not the perception of others that is most important in our lives. It is His perception of us that counts first.

This must have been as apparent in Christ's day as it is in our day because it was a topic addressed many times in the New Testament.

For example in Mt. 10:37 Jesus talked about a proper perspective of love for our earthly families.

Matthew 10:37-39 (NIV)

[37] "Anyone who **loves** (phileo) his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who **loves** (phileo) his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; [38] and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. [39] Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus is not saying that we should not love our earthly family members. What He wants us to understand is that our interests, which are revealed in phileo love, must be the same interests as Jesus' interests. In other words Jesus' interests take priority over our personal interests and the interests of our family members. This is not to say that we do not have some of the same interests that our family members might have, or that we should have no interest in our family. Jesus wanted us to know that if we want the best for ourselves and our family members, it will be genuinely fulfilled in the interests He has for all of us. When we place the interests of Jesus at the forefront of everything in our lives we will realize that His interest is to take care of us by supplying all of our physical, material, mental, and spiritual needs. And sometimes the priority of spiritual needs are not at the forefront of family and friends and we have to make a choice about where the priority of our own interests lie at any given moment.

In Mt. 23.6 the Pharisees show the ultimate result of placing self love and self interests at the forefront of their lives.

Matthew 23:2-7, 12 (NIV)

[2] "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. [3] So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. [4] They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

[5] "**Everything they do is done for men to see:** They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; [6] they **love** the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; [7] they **love** to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' ...

[12] For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Jesus wants us to understand that what we love (phileo) in this life is important. When we love with phileo love we are showing where our interests lie. When we love with phileo love we are showing that our interests are the same as the object of our love. If we love to be seen by others when we pray or give to the needs of others, our interests are focused in the opinions that others have of us when they see us praying and giving, and then think we are righteous. We love (phileo) to look righteous in the eyes of others. In the same manner if we love (phileo) to have the place of honor at a gathering, then we are interested in the opinions of others and love ourselves. Jesus wants us to know that His interests should take priority in our daily lives. This does not mean that we do not have other interests; it means that every interest we have should be stained with His perfect interests for us and for all those around us.

Unlike Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who used phileo love in this negative way as a warning to the reality of the interests of our lives, John and Paul use the word phileo in both negative and positive ways.

Paul for example writing to Titus uses the word phileo love in his closing remarks.

Titus 3:12-15 (NIV)

[12] As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. [13] Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. [14] Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.

[15] Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love (phileo) us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

Notice the context for his use for this word. It is in the context of "those who love (phileo) us in the faith". The word faith, used in verse 15, indicates those who have the same interests that Paul and his associates had. It indicates those who have the same interests that Christ has. But what are those interests? Look at verse 13, "Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need." Paul uses the word phileo to talk about the kind of relationships we should have as members of the Body of Christ. We are to have loving caring relationships that share a common interest. That common interest is the love, care, and concern for others, as those interests line up with the interests of Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

The word phileo is used 25 times in the New Testament. More than half of them appear in John's writings, he uses the word phileo 13 times.

In Jn 5:20 he speaks of the love the Father has for the Son.

John 5:16-24 (NIV)

[16] So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.

[17] Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." [18] For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

[19] Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

[20] For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. [21] For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. [22] Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, [23] that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

[24] "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

This love, expressed as phileo love, is wrapped up in a comment Jesus makes in verse 19... "the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing". Jesus only does what He sees the father doing because His love for the Father, and the love the Father has for Him is wrapped up in their common interest – the Father's will for the Son. This is also an expression of God's love for mankind in that His will for the Son is to become the sacrifice for sins, salvation for mankind. This is the supreme interest God has for mankind and Jesus participates in that interest. Both God the Father and Jesus Christ love us with phileo love. Here phileo love is an expression of Eternal Life.

John also wants us to know that this phileo love is an expression of warm affection, emotion, feelings, and passion. One example of phileo love is seen in John's account of Lazarus being raised from the dead.

John 11:1-6 (NIV)

[11:1] Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. [2] This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. [3] So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you **love** (phileo) is sick."

[4] When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, **it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.**" [5] Jesus **loved** (agape) Martha and her sister and Lazarus. [6] Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

Look at how John uses phileo and agape here. The two sisters of Lazarus recognize that Jesus has a love for Lazarus that was warm affection, emotion, passion, phileo love. But after learning that Lazarus was sick Jesus agape love constrained Him to wait instead of rushing to Lazarus' side to heal him. This higher purpose of God must take priority here and so Jesus momentarily sets his affection, His phileo love, for Lazarus aside in order to bring a greater glory to God the Father by letting Lazarus die.

John 11:32-37 (NIV)

[32] When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

[33] When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, **he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.** [34] "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

[35] **Jesus wept.**

[36] Then the Jews said, "See how he **loved** (phileo) him!"

[37] But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Look at the emotion and passion Jesus has for this family and especially for Lazarus. John wants us to know that God loves us with phileo love, God loves us with feelings and emotions, He loves us passionately.

John also wants us to know that this phileo love is an expression of warm affection, emotion, feelings, and passion from God to mankind. Phileo love is the passionate love that welled up in Peter the night he drew his sword in the garden to protect Jesus from the mob that came to arrest Him. John wants us to know that the love God the Father and Jesus, His only Son, has for us is that of warm affection, emotion, feelings, and passion. This passionate love drove Jesus from the garden where He had asked to be released from the cross. This passionate love carried Jesus through the embarrassment and cruel torture that led to His death. This passionate love drove God the Father to turn His face from Jesus in the moment Jesus needed Him most. All that is done to accomplish our salvation and is an expression of the passionate love of God for mankind.

Can I ask you a question? . . . This week; what have you done to passionately love the God who has passionately loved you with everything at His disposal? Or, have your actions this week shown that you are more interested in yourself?

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