



4Love Series (Week 4)

Agape Love Is a Command

John 3:16; 13:34-35; 17:20-23; 1 John 4:10-12

OPEN

When was the first time you saw or heard the verse John 3:16? Why do you think this verse has been, perhaps, the most popular in the Bible, and the one most people are able to quote?

DISCUSS

In our fourth week of the 4Love series, we have examined Affection (*storge*), Friendship (*philia*), Romance (*eros*), and now turn our attention to the deepest of all the loves...Charity (*agape*). Agape love may be defined as:

- Unconditional - Does not seek a return. It is love for love's sake. It does not seek a return or reward on investment. There is no conditional statement, no "if, then" clause in the sentence. It exists for its own sake and does not operate out of need.
- Willful - A conscious decision to promote the good of another
- Charitable - Seeks flourishing, enables us to love what is deemed unlovable.

How is this kind of love different than the others we have discussed these past three weeks?

In John 13, Jesus gives a command that is to be lived, without exception, by all who follow him. *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* — John 13:34-35

- Look at John 13:1-33. How did Jesus love his disciples with the deepest love of all?
- How could you imagine it being difficult to love the disciples (both individually and collectively) at this point in his ministry?

It is rumored that English Philosopher, G.K. Chesterton's favorite story was *Beauty and the Beast*. He said, "Among the many lessons that Beauty and the Beast teaches, one is preeminent: that unlovely things must be deeply loved before they become lovable."

- How does this love remind you of the love of God?
- When considering Jesus' command, how well have we love one another in the same way?
 - In your families and in our homes?
 - In the church?

Where do you see love *falling short of glorious agape love of God* within the church?

Have you seen examples where the church (people of God together) revealing a compelling witness of Christ to those who do not know Jesus?

How have you seen the church hurt the witness of Christ to those outside the church?

Why is loving like God loves so hard? Why do so many things seem so much more important to us EVEN THOUGH is Jesus so clearly commanded this to his followers?

To love as I have loved you will mean for us several things. Share how these things *hit your soul*.

- Loving make us vulnerable
- Loving is a choice
- Loving transmits blessing for the sake of others
- Loving reflects the heart and nature us God
- Loving brings with it rescue and a lifeline to others.

NEXT STEPS

- Take an honest "love inventory" of yourself this week.
 - What would it mean for you to love with *agape love* more and more?
 - You may want to write a list of reflections, commitments, confessions, or a prayer to God.
- Continue to read and reflect on the Bible verses, teaching, and discussions from this study.