

(1Th 4:9 “But as touching brotherly love... to love one another.”) A good example of this kind of love is that between friends or brothers in the flesh. It is good, but normally no as dedicated as in a marriage or towards God.

Eros. (This word does not occur in the Bible.) This word is a type of love that is very carnal, and is only centered in what benefits one’s own self as seen in 2Ti 3:2 *For men shall be lovers (gr. filautos) of their own selves.* The word “erotic” comes from this concept, and is used for example in pornography, prostitution, homosexuality, etc. The idea corresponds to these concepts and sinful practices. It is a type of love that is totally what is convenient to one’s own self, and this is the only preoccupation in this kind of love, to obtain what pleases one’s self, and really nothing more.

Stergos¹. This word does not occur in the Bible except in the negative *astergos* – “without natural affection” (2Tim 3:3; Rom 1:31). *Stergos* has the concept of affection that should naturally exist between parents and children, or within a couple that treats each other right. As in the case of synonyms in any language, there is a basic common concept among all, but each word may have a slightly different and unique meaning. The words may be used for the general concept or with its specific meaning in view. For example, in the conversation between Jesus and Peter in John 21:15-17, Jesus asks Peter if he loves him (agapeo) and Peter answers yes (fileo). At the end, Jesus asks if he loves him (fileo), and Peter now answers with agapeo.

“Stergos” – The Correct Kind of Love

Simple put, there is an obligation that each person has because of the sacrifices of others for you. This is seen in the child’s gratitude to the parents

¹ Rom 12:10 “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” *filostorgos* [filo, storgoj] or a combinación of filostorgos and stergos.

because of all they do for him, and within a marriage (one for another).

Respect of a child for his earthly parents is commanded by God, and is the first commandment with promise (Exo 20:12). God commands children to obey their parents (Eph 6:1-3) and should respect their instructions for his life (Prov 1:8; 6:20; 13:1). Under the Law of the Old Testament, God saw the breaking of this principle so grave an offense that the death penalty is applied on disobedient and disrespectful children (Exo 21:17; Mat 15:4-6). God condemns children stealing from their parents (take what is not theirs to take) Prov 28:24.

Parents should love their children, and not provoke them to anger (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). Their duty is to raise them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). Biblical love between parents and their children is to discipline them as God disciplines His children (Prov 4:1-4; 1The 2:11; Heb 12:5-11). Heb 12:6 “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” We are all born babies, and from there, very few go on to perfection² (maturity). Pro 22:15 *Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* Pro 13:24 *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.* Rev 3:19 *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.* So nobody can say that they love their children correctly if they do not control and discipline them with moral instruction in order to better their lives spiritually. In Heb 12:6-10 God compares love with discipline between parents and children and that love with which God loves us. The child without parental discipline and oversight is as an illegitimate son (Heb 12:8), because there is no love there. Love requires care, oversight, and correction, or it is hypocrisy. The child-parent relationship likewise must have the child respecting and honoring the

² **Perfection** in the Bible means to be adult, mature, that one can well endure the problems and crises of life.

parent or the relationship is incorrect or non-existent. God tells us that sometimes this relationship has to be broken for the sake of the gospel (Mat 10:21-22, 35-36), and then God will take care of that person (Psa 27:10; Isa 49:15; 2Cor 6:18) and his brothers in the faith will become his new family (Mark 10:29-30; Luke 18:29-30).

“Filos” – Filial Love

This love is also commanded in the Bible. It is the type of love between friends³ or brothers⁴. John 6:20 uses this word for love between God the Father and God the Son, of the Father’s love towards us in John 16:27. Also John 11:3, 36 refers to the love of Jesus towards Lazarus, equally in John 20:2 of the Apostle John. 1Cor 16:22 bravely declares “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema. (cursed, or that you don’t touch it).” This concept is one of being friendly, or of treating favorably.

“Eros” – Egotistical Love

This word does not exist in the Bible, but the Bible condemns this kind of thing. While there is a relationship of give and take in friendly filostorgos love, eros love is all take and very little concern for the other person. In a filostorgos friendship, at times you get, at times you give. Your relationship is for the friendship, and nothing more. In erotic love, people seek to please themselves using other people. Prostitutes loan their bodies for money, and men pay for this sexual pleasure. This is the type of love that is totally condemned in the Bible.

“Ágape” – Exalted Love

One cannot understand this kind of love, much less practice it without understanding that this is the very essence of God. 1John 4:1 “God is love (agape).” If God defines His essence with this concept, then it is very important. This type of love

³ Mat 26:48, Mark 14:44, and Luke 22:47 use this word for a sign of friendship even a kiss.

⁴ Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7

is something that is a high sacrifice for the other person (**John 10:11**; **1Thess 2:8**), and is the example of love that Christ leaves us **Eph 5:2** “*And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.*” It is to want and complete the desire of seeing good and benefit happen to the other person, no matter how the other person treats you or acts. It is love without conditions, in that it does not seek anything or it does not really return much to the one giving this love. The person continues loving even when there is nothing to show for the love from the other person **2Cor 12:15**.

In **Mat 5:43-44** Jesus taught his disciples the opposite of what most think (to love their friends and hate their enemies), saying that we should love our enemies and those who mistreat us. This is the concept of agape. This is the love that is directed by God, to our brethren in the faith, to our neighbor (**Rom 13:8-9**), and even to our enemies. **Mat 22:37** use this word in the commandment that we love towards God, and in verse 39 towards our neighbors. According to this passage, it is to capture this idea and practice it towards God and our neighbors (**Gal 5:14**). By doing this one complies with all God wants of you! Jesus loved the young rich man (Mark 10.21), and he commanded him to sell all his possessions and riches to encounter the true salvation. This love does not restrict what is done in order to get benefit for the other (**John 3:16** God so loved the world he sent his son).

Love towards God – Salvation is a personal relationship with God. This relationship has as its base love (agape). We show this love relationship towards God by obeying him (**John 14:15, 21**). He that doesn't obey God, is not saved “*If a man love me, he will keep my words... He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings*” **John 14:23-24**. The essence of God is this type of love, and God wants this character to be in us by our own will (**Jn. 17:26**). The Bible defines the redeemed as a person who loves God (**1Cor 2:9**; **8:3**; **Jam 1:12**).

Love towards our brethren – In **John 8:42**, Jesus accused the Jews of not being saved, because if they were saved, they would love Jesus. Later in **John 13:34** he expands on this by saying...“*That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*” (**Jn. 15:12, 17**). In John's first epistle, it is very clear that we can identify⁵ true Christians because they have captured the idea of divine agape love and practice it daily in their lives, with God, with the spouse, with their neighbor, and especially with their Christian brethren. **1Jn 4:7-8** “*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*” For this reason we go to church to fellowship and show this love to our brethren. John makes the argument that nobody has seen God (**1Jn. 4:12, 19-21**), but if we love our brethren, we love God. Jesus makes the same point in **Mat. 25:31-46**. See also **1Jn. 5:1-2**.

Love within marriage – God commands this agape love within the marriage, and simply put, if the two seek this love as the goal as a family, all the problems will resolve themselves easily. **Eph 5:25** commands, “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*” The Christian man should sacrifice his own for the benefit and good of his wife. When he does this, he becomes as God, and becomes a sweet smelling savor (**Eph 5.2**) to God. Men should love their wives as their own selves, as their own bodies (**Eph 5:28**; **Col. 3:19**). Equally the women should love their husbands (**Titus 2:4**).

⁵ 1 John 2.15; 3:10-11, 14, 23; 4:11-12.

Biblical Love

How a Christian should Love

By David Cox
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There are at least 4 different Greek words for love that identify different types of love. Each one puts an emphasis on a different sense in the general concept of love.

Different concepts for Love

Ágape. (The noun occurs 106 times, and the verb 109). This word presents the highest concept of love. It is used as an action of God (the love of God) and is commanded of human beings to practice one towards another (1 Cor 13). This type of love is one that is based in the benefits towards the object of your love. This is not egotistical love, but rather concentrates on personal sacrifice for the benefit and good of the other. God sacrificed his son because of this kind of love (**John 3:16**).

Filos. (The noun occurs 27 times, and the verb 21). Signifies a love between two people that is cooperative, not so dedicated as agape, but even so it is something recommended as between siblings.