

Love Is Not...

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Numerous Biblical words have been wordnapped, hijacked, redefined, and misused (e.g., *grace, faith, miracle, elect, foreordained*). *Love* is another of these much-abused words. The most frequently occurring Greek word for *love* in the New Testament is *agape* — one's unselfish seeking of the best for its object without regard for the object's worthiness. This highest form of love is the love God demonstrated to mankind in giving His Son to make the salvation of humankind possible (John 3:16). Perhaps seeing what love is **not** will better enable us to understand what it is.

- **Not mere words:** The apostle John noted this fact: "My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). John does not forbid verbal expressions of love, but he observes that mere words do not prove its existence. The proof of love is in what we do more than in what we say. Paul wrote: "Let love be without hypocrisy" (Rom. 12:9).
- **Not mere emotion:** "Agape" love involves one's emotions, but it goes beyond mere sentimentality and affection. These are noble feelings that we should cultivate toward others, but until they are expressed in loving deeds, they remain mere feelings or emotions. Love is not feeling and/or emotion, but the appropriate sincere expression of such. "Agape" love may often exist in the absence of feeling, emotion, or affection.
- **Not mere lust or sexual fulfillment:** The entertainment industry has so corrupted *love* that *love* and *sex* are practically synonyms to the masses. While to "make love" to one's companion was an innocent reference to courtship before the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s, it now means to engage in sexual intercourse with him/her. God created us with sexual instincts and desires, the fulfillment of which are honorable in God approved marriages (Heb. 13:4a). However, outside of Scriptural marriage, sexual fulfillment constitutes fornication, whose practitioners God will judge (v. 4b). The very fabric of our nation's morals and families has been grievously weakened by this polluted misconception of *love*.
- **Not license to sin or freedom from law and conditions thereof:** The clamor for so-called "unconditional love" in human relationships is very often an appeal for unconditional **approval** of sinful behavior in the appellant. This liberal idea has become prevalent in recent years. Parents "love" a child too much to restrain or punish him or express disapproval of his behavior. Preachers and elders "love" their brethren too much to rebuke or correct them. Many folks opine that God "loves" us too much to condemn us or hold us accountable to His law. Loving parents discipline their children (Pro. 13:24), as does a loving God (Heb. 12:6). God's love does not free us from His law. True, God "unconditionally" loved all mankind so much that He made salvation possible for all through His Son (John 3:16). The same passage declares that God **conditionally** extends His "saving" love only to believers in His Son.

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