

Thomas F. Chambers  
February 1980

### DISCERNING GENUINE LOVE

If a room with 50 people in it were all asked to write down their definition of love, there would probably be 50 different definitions of the word. All would perhaps contain the same basic elements and all might be right to some degree. Yet when we are defining this most commonly used English word in our vocabulary, we lose what God has truly intended to teach us from His Word. Notice from the following verses the high priority that LOVE is to God and should be to us. Write your observations.

Matt.22:37 -  
22:38 -  
22:39 -  
22:40 -

Luke 6:27-35

Jn.13:34-35

What does Jesus say is to be the main characteristic of His people? Jn.8:32

How do we show our love for Christ? Jn.14:15-23

Now let's back up and observe the Greek words for love.

"Erao" - the love of passion - the sexual romantic desires

"Stergo" - the love for family - closely related to each other

"Phileo" - the love of fondness or affection - friendship

These three are good and proper in their places yet all are conditional and mutual. That is, they depend upon something in someone else to stimulate them to action. For instance, "I love you if you are nice to me", or "I love you because you're beautiful", or "I love you only when you're good", or "I love you because you're such a great person and do many nice things." God's love is not dependent upon a response. In fact, we can only love Him because He first loved us (I Jn.4:19). The fourth kind of love is what is known as "God's" love: "Agapao" - the love that is purest, deepest, unselfish, unconditional and divinely self-sacrificial in essence. Write down observations about God's love.

Jn.3:16  
Rom.5:8  
Lk.15:11-24

Eph.3:19  
I Jn.3:1-2  
Jn.15:9-13

Gal.2:20  
Eph.2:4  
Jer.31:3  
I Jn.3:16

I Jn.4:10-20

Notice this love is a command to us according to Jn.13:34-35. That means that it is not based on feelings of affection or emotions. It is obeyed and put into action by our own will or choice!

Matt.22:37-38  
Matt.5:44  
I Jn.3:17-18

Matt.22:39  
I Jn.4:7-8

Where does this love come from? Do we conjure it up in ourselves?  
It is not from us:

Rom.8:7-8  
7:15

But from God and being born of God.

Gal.5:22-23  
I Jn.4:7-8  
I Jn.4:16

In order to really learn how to love we don't look within ourselves but must first understand who God is and how He loves us.

Then from our obedience as we respond to God's loving us!

I Pet.1:22

All the law of God is fulfilled by this one word. (Matt.22:40)! EXERCISE: Think through the 10 commandments and write down how love fulfills everyone!

Look up the following and write in observations about what love does and doesn't do.

Rom.13:8-10

Prov.10:12

Rom.14:5

I Cor.8:1

I Cor.16:14

Gal.5:13

Col.2:2

Col.3:14

I Thes.4:9-12

Gal.6:2

2 Cor.5:14-15

I Jn.2:5

I Jn.3:17-18

I Jn.3:23

Lk.6:27-38

Rom.5:5

We have learned that God loves us so much that He gave up His own Son to die on the cross in our place and take away our sin. He commands us to love, but we can't do it in and of ourselves. To live out God's love we must depend upon Him because He is love. It must come from Him. Therefore we can recognize that He's already made it possible for us to love His way once we have been born into His family (I Jn.4:7-8). We begin to feel love when we begin to do loving things and show love to others. The first place to start is to love God. We do that by obedience to His Word (Jn.14:15-23). How much we love God is determined by how much we obey His Word! The next place to start is to "love your neighbor." That is the nearest person to you - your family, parents, spouse, in-laws, church, people at work, in school, your job, your neighborhood and even your enemies (anyone who's in opposition to you).

Rom.12:17-21

Lk.6:27-35

Objection: "But I don't feel like loving them. Isn't that hypocrisy to love if I don't feel anything for them?" No, you obey God by an act of your will, against your feelings. Be honest with God, but love them by faith, depending on God's supernatural love and power! Phil.4:13

The power comes in the doing and the feeling comes afterwards. We're always responsible and accountable to obey God whether we have a "warm furry feeling" about it or not! Right? And look at the joyful results:

Jn.15:10

Josh.1:8

I Jn.4:17-19

Js.1:22-25

In combining many definitions of love according to the scriptural insights about God's love, I've discovered that it is an:

unselfish

unconditional

self sacrificial

commitment

to benefit others

by giving and meeting their needs

I heard one man say, "Love is everything you do without self in view". It is others centered. Phil.2:3-4.

This study would never be complete without looking at the Bible's great love chapter, I Cor.13. Here we find a beautifully expanded, inclusive definition. It gives very specific and practical ways of living with those around us. There are many ways of studying it.

1. Read through it at least 5-10 times. Use other translations.
  2. Write down at least 25 observations. Also trace "love" in I John.
  3. By now if you don't have the bulk of it memorized, memorize it, especially 13:4-7.
  4. Put your name in where love is.
  5. List how you've failed in these ways to mother, father, brother, sister, husband, wife, employers, employees, pastor, church members, friends, neighbors...
  6. You only list how you've failed, so you can confess it to God and others and move on by applying it. Now list how you can begin to demonstrate God's love with God's help today!
  7. Define the words by expanding the meanings as much as possible. The more expanded the definition, the farther reaching the application will become.
  8. Look for example in the life of Christ which portrays each definition.
  9. To gain a further Biblical understanding of love, read the book of Hosea and make observations about the unfailing, unconditional love.
  10. To still further your Biblical perspective of God's love, read Song of Solomon and make observations about the beauty of this caring beneficial love in interpersonal relationships.
- No matter what you accomplish in life, if you don't have love, you're a ZERO! I Cor.13:1-3.

This is the measuring stick that God puts forth. How do you measure up? You see if we commit ourselves to cultivate these principles in our lives, we won't confuse or complicate our goal and responsibility with a lot of do's and don'ts. The building of character and the fruit of the spirit is based upon our obedience to God's Truth (I Pet.1:22), and love sums it all up (Matt.22:40)! The completest expression of the love of Christ is the exercise of His love in and through our lives to others. We must seriously ask God to give us the wisdom and understanding of these elements (both negative and positive) so that we may truly reflect Him as we conform to the example and very image of Christ.

AMPLIFICATIONS AND APPLICATION of I Cor.13:4-7

These apply to all behaviour-responses, thoughts, attitudes, speech and actions.

- 1. Love is patient - long suffering, calm, endures offenses, forbearing in experiencing troubles and difficulties, leaves \_\_\_\_\_ in the hands of our Sovereign Father.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_  
(person) (action taken)

\_\_\_\_\_

- 2. Love is kind - showing kindness by beneficial and useful actions, planned and unplanned actions, going out of your way, seeking to help constructively and creatively, being considerate.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 3. Love is not envious or jealous but content and thankful, not focused on, "How come they get all the breaks?", but rather focusing on God's grace and providence to all:

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 4. Love is not boastful, arrogant, vaunting itself in vain glory but rather humble, modest and gracious, carefully considering others, not calling attention to self.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 5. Love is not proud, nor vainly seeking to impress others with self, not trying to be the center of attraction, overbearing and domineering, but rather humble and reserved.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Love does not behave unbecomingly or improperly, indecent, rude or impolite but is courteous and considerate.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Love does not seek it's own or is not selfish and self centered, but rather self-sacrificial and seeks to benefit others because they are more important.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Love is not provoked, or roused to anger quickly, or irritable and touchy, but rather even/good tempered, of calm disposition and gentle.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Love thinks no evil, doesn't take into account a wrong suffered creating bitter, resentful, unforgiving, vindictive, wrathful people seeking vengeance and getting even, but rather forgiving, sincere and generous.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Love does not rejoice in sin (injustice, unrighteousness, evil). Love doesn't delight in another's problems or expose other's sins, but rather rejoices or finds pleasure in the truth and when others obey it!

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Love bears all things - holds up under pressures in a supportive, protecting way, enduring with others their burdens.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Love believes all things - gives the benefit of the doubt. Love isn't suspicious or cynical, but willing to trust a person. It looks for and maximizes the best in them and the situation.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Love hopes all things - it is optimistic, not pessimistic, not despondent and giving up, but focusing on God's purposes, promises and provisions.

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Love endures all things - it perseveres, it doesn't give up, but outlasts any problems. It's victorious! Invincible!

Application: 1. How have I failed? Identify specific ways. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I will love \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Notice the phrase "all things" in the last couple of statements about love. What does that include? Or exclude?

People - in-laws, spouse, children, neighbors, church members, workers...

Places - work, home, school ...

Things - circumstances, environment, house, car ...

- No matter what happens to you ...

- No matter who does what to you ...

You are responsible to LOVE.