



Bible Study

## LET'S MAKE OUR CHURCH A CARING COMMUNITY!

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35

### Purpose of this Bible Class lesson:

To lead all participants

1. To see more clearly and appreciate more fully what it means to be loved by God in Christ
2. To desire more eagerly to love others—fellow members and visitors to our congregation—in the way that they are loved by God.
3. To believe that this love, along with spiritual nurture and outreach, is Christ’s vision for his Church

Read Acts 2:42-47, and describe the relationship characteristics of the early Jerusalem church:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Characteristics of

- Relationship to the Word –
- Relationship to the World –
- Relationship to each other –

### God cares for us with an *agape* love

The Greek words for love:

1. **Storge** – the natural \_\_\_\_\_ parents have for children (Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:1-3)
2. **Philia** – based on \_\_\_\_\_ interests, insights or tastes (James 4:4)
3. **Eros** – characterized by love of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, love that desires to \_\_\_\_\_. Not found in the New Testament; not contrary to the Bible—in other Greek writings it can also be a love of what is good, or even love for the gods.
4. **Agape** – God’s kind of love! Rarely used before the New Testament, but almost the only word used for love in the New Testament. God’s **agape** is aroused not by what we are, but by \_\_\_\_\_; not by the fact that we are lovable, but by the fact that God is \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 4:8)

Look at the passages below, where agape is translated “love.” What are the distinguishing marks of the *agape* of God?

**1 John 4:10** – *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins*

**Distinguishing mark:** \_\_\_\_\_

**John 3:16** – *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

**Distinguishing mark:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 5:6-8** – *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

**Distinguishing mark:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ephesians 2:1-5,8-9** – *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ... For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*

**Distinguishing mark:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary:** God’s love, *agape*, as revealed in the Scriptures is unlike any other love. It does not look for something of worth, some kind of attractiveness, on the part of the potential recipient of His love. It does not contemplate what kind of return it might get from a person to determine whether or not it is worthwhile to give him His love. God’s love is a giving love through and through. The cross of Jesus is the outstanding demonstration of the love of God.

## God's *agape* love transforms us into caring children of God

Look at the passages below. Summarize what they tell us about the impact of God's *agape* for us:

**1 John 4:7,8,19** – *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ... We love because he first loved us.*

**Luke 7:47** – *Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.*

**Summary:** God's *agape* gives birth to \_\_\_\_\_

**1 John 3:14** – *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*

**1 John 3:10** – *This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.*

**John 13:35** – *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

**Summary:** *Agape* is \_\_\_\_\_ of our new birth.

**1 John 4:21** – *And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*

**John 13:34** – *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*

**Romans 13:8-9** – *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

**Summary:** *Agape* for others is \_\_\_\_\_

**Galatians 5:22** – *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.*

**Romans 5:5** – *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

**Summary:** *Agape* is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit's work.

**1 Corinthians 13:1-3** – *If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

**Summary:** Agape is \_\_\_\_\_ to Christian life.

## We put flesh on *agape* by what we do and say

Our actions reveal *agape*.

**James 2:15-16** – *Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?*

**1 John 3:16-18** – *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*

Our words reveal *agape*.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** – *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**Proverbs 12:25** – *Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.*

**Proverbs 16:24** – *Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*

## Discussion about increasing the *agape* level in our church through Special Ministries

Respond to these common objections to ministry to people with a disability:

“It doesn’t pay to spend so much time on one or two members.”

“The family should take care of that.”

“The pastor already has too much to do.”

“We don’t know what to do.”

Look at the list of people served by Special Ministries resources.

Which ones might your church need to increase?

Which ones might be a good opportunity for your church to use for outreach?

Which ones might you personally be drawn to show some agape?

**Mission for the Visually Impaired** (Blind, difficulty reading normal size print) [wels.net/mvi](http://wels.net/mvi)

**Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing** [wels.net/mdhh](http://wels.net/mdhh)

**Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministries** [wels.net/iddm](http://wels.net/iddm)

**Mental Health Needs** (addictions, support groups, survivor abuse) [wels.net/mental-health](http://wels.net/mental-health)

**Health and Wellness** (aging, nursing home, active seniors, parish nurses, chaplain training)  
[wels.net/health-and-wellness](http://wels.net/health-and-wellness)

**Prison ministry** Bible study at a local jail [wels.net/prison](http://wels.net/prison)

**Ministry to members away in military service** [wels.net/military](http://wels.net/military)

**Care of called workers** [wels.net/cccw](http://wels.net/cccw)

You can find more information at: [wels.net/special-ministries/](http://wels.net/special-ministries/)

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