

MISSION OF LOVE
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theme 1999

This theme for 1999 is very challenging. "Mission" is easy to understand: we go to other places to accomplish a goal and the vehicle is 'love'. But what does "love" mean? The word love is now so without content due to the Hollywood-film-industry.

If you read the Bible, you find the word 'love' many times. But the word love means different things. So to understand the biblical content we have to study the original Greek texts of the Bible. Here you see clear the different forms of love:

- 1) EROS = love, but in the meaning of: sexuality, lust, desire for the other sex, enjoyment of sexuality, etc.
- 2) PHILEO = love, but in the form of friendship, companionship (as well between spouses); it means as well to like somebody or something, brotherly/sisterly relationships.
- 3) AGAPE = this is the love where the Bible talks about so many times. This is the unconditional love, sacrificial love. Agape is as well compassion. Agape is as well the highest love of God for mankind and people to God. Agape shows in our deeds of unselfishness.
 - OT: shows the Agape (love) of God in the revelation of God to Israel and His acting with the people of Israel.
 - NT: shows the Agape (love) of God towards persons, individuals and the whole world. That love is clearly revealed in the life of Jesus. He shows us God's character.

One of the greatest poems, the epic of (Agape) love you will find in 1 Cor 13. This poem has inspired and comforted millions through the ages.

1 Cor 13 "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not 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 have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails, But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love".

In this beautiful song you find 9 aspects/qualities of Agape-love:

1. Patience - love passive: no hurry; suffers long; bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things.
2. Kindness - love in action: never acts rashly or insolently; not inconsistent, puffed up, or proud.
3. Generosity - love in competition: not envious or jealous.
4. Humility - love in hiding: no parade; no airs; works then retires.
5. Courtesy - love in society: does not behave unseemly; always polite; at home with all classes; never rude or discourteous.
6. Unselfishness - love in essence: never selfish, sour, or bitter; seeks only good of others; does not retaliate or seek revenge.
7. Good temper - love in disposition: never irritated; never resentful.

8. Righteousness - love in conduct: hates sin; never glad when others go wrong; always gladdened by goodness to others; always slow to expose; always eager to believe the best; always hopeful, always enduring.
9. Sincerity - love in profession: never boastful and conceited; not a hypocrite; always honest; leaves no impression but what is strictly true; never self-assertive; does not blaze out in passionate anger, not brood over wrongs; always just, joyful, and truthful; knows how to be silent; full of trust; always present.

Let us look into some other bible-verses what other important aspects of *Agape* love are:

Math. 22: 35-40 *"One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind". This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments"*.

Some may call this the whole message of the Bible in a nutshell. The vertical relationship with God, forms a cross with our fellow-men. Every human being is somewhere in a position on this cross-connection. Every human being has to consider where he is in this design.

John 3: 16-17 *"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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"*.

Because God loves us, can we love him and others.

John 13: 34-35 *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"*.

What a true sign of discipleship. We have here a clear, measurable, visible, recognisable criterion.

John 14: 15-19 + 21 *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him"*.

About this love you will find here a few other texts to think about:

Rom. 8: 35+37-39 *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"*.

Jacob 2:5 *"Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?"*

1 John 4: 7-12 *"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. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friend, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us"*.

1 John 4: 17-19 *"In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us"*.

2 Cor. 13:11 *"Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you"*.

Gal. 5: 13-26 *"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other"*.

Ef. 3:17 *"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love"*.

Ef. 4: 1-3 *"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace"*.

Ef. 5: 1-2 *"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"*.

1 Thes. 5:8 *"But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet"*.

Love is a decision; love is a commitment; and finally love deals with our emotions. But love is not a vague feeling, it is a decision you take and a deed you do: to love God and your neighbors. Those deeds must be much more as saying the statements: 'God I love you so much' or 'Oh, yes, I love my neighbor'. Jacob writes clear: show your faith out of your actions. And Jesus told, when asked how to love our neighbor, the story of the good Samaritan. Jesus closes the story with the sentence: '*go and do the same*'.

So love is shown out of your decisions and actions. The first christian churches were very active in social actions, because of this clear passage; regularly there were meals to feed the poor. It will not surprise you that these meals were called "Agape's". Remains the question: and now what about you? How is your Agape-love towards God, your neighbors, society, creation?

This is the content of this years theme '*Mission of love*'.
We are send to this world like Jesus.