



## Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

# Advanced Study AS006: Defining Love

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**Read:** 1 John 4:7-16.

**Introduction:** The Greek of New Testament times recognises four types of love, two of which are used in the New Testament. The most dominant of the two is the word *agapé*, which is the subject of this Study. *Agapé* cannot be defined by reference to its use in Classical Greek, since it is only in Christianity that its true meaning was formulated. We must look in the New Testament itself to fathom the depth of its meaning.

**1. Love's Origin.** Love springs from God because it is the very nature of God. Can you see a progression of thought as you read the following verses in the order shown here: 1 John 4:10, 1 John 4:7, 2 Cor 13:11 and 1 John 4:8,16? Why do you think William Barclay says this explains five things: Creation, Free-will, Providence, Redemption, and the life beyond?<sup>∞</sup> Are the words "God is love" reversible?

### 2. Love's Demonstration.

(i) Read John 3:16. Why was this such great love on the part of God? What is "the world" that is spoken of here?

(ii) Demonstrated by Jesus (read John 13:34, 15:12). List a few examples of ways that Jesus showed love to people.

**3. Love's Character and Application.** Moving on from examining God's love to the love we should show to others, make a list of the characteristics of love shown in 1 Cor 13:4-8. Take time to ponder on each characteristic, imagining different situations in which that characteristic might be required. Examine your own life in the light of these scriptures. Pray for grace to respond with love in those situations. On 24 occasions, the King James version translates *agapé* as "charity". Allowing for the probable weaking of that term over the years, why do you think they used that word?

**4. Love's Endurance.** Love is one of three qualities that will survive forever (1 Cor 13:13). What does that tell us about the life hereafter?

**To think about:** What connection is there between love and grace? What do you think CS Lewis meant by calling God "The inventor of all loves."\*

**To dig deeper:** Work through chapters 6-9 of the Study Guide *Faith, Hope and Love* (available as a free PDF file by sending an email to: [orders@learn-your-bible.org.uk](mailto:orders@learn-your-bible.org.uk)). Read what you can find on the meaning of the word *agapé*

<sup>∞</sup> William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: John and Jude*, The St Andrew Press, page 99.

\* C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Fontana, page 116.