

“Agape Love”

There’s a LOT of love songs on the radio. What’s your favorite love song? [People suggest love songs] ... okay, let me ask you *this*, what’s your favorite NON-romantic love song?

I want to help us understand today a critical aspect of being a great lover ... and that’s loving people without *romantic* complications. The Bible calls this “Agape Love” which is the kind of love Jesus modelled.

- His encounter with the woman at the well was gushing with love.
- The woman caught in adultery.
- His words of love to John about his mother, uttered from the cross.
- The compassion He had for the crowds, for hurting people, for His disciples.

All of this was a pure godly love, the kind of love he wants us to have in each of our relationships ... from strangers we meet at an Interstate rest stop, to family and friends. In fact, this is the kind of love that build the foundation for a meaningful romantic love.

There’s 15 descriptions of this kind of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, and even though these words are sometimes used at weddings or written on anniversary cards ... this is the kind of love God gives us to share with *everyone*, including the people in this room!

Let’s start by looking at the SOURCE of this kind of love: 1 John 4:16 (NLT), We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

God IS love. This verse is clear to say that the kind of love I’m about to describe is organically attached to our faith. This kind of love is super-naturally received and passed along.

You can’t, I can’t manufacture this kind of love. It’s received from God, implanted into our hearts by a relationship with Jesus and then shared with others as a by-product of our faith.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NLT)	1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (KJV)
[4] Love is patient and kind.	[4] Charity suffereth long, <i>and</i> is kind;
Love is not jealous or boastful or proud	charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
[5] or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.	[5] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
[6] It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.	[6] Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
[7] Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.	[7] Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
But love will last forever!	[8] Charity never faileth:

Charity = “Agape” Love ... it’s a GIVING kind of love, not a selfish kind of love.

1) Love is PATIENT.

The word for “suffering” or “patient” comes from a compound word derived from “long lasting” and “anger.” The idea is *the patient restraint of anger*. Let’s face it, every relationship has to handle anger. A loving relationship *restrains* anger, expresses patience with others.

For each of these 15 descriptions I am going to give a modern description that comes from a great little resource called [Sparkling Gems from the Greek](#).

This one is: ***“Love patiently and passionately bears with others for as long as patience is needed....”***

Agape love doesn't throw in the towel and quit. In fact, the harder the fight and the longer the struggle, the more committed *agape* love becomes. Like a candle with an endless wick, it just keeps burning and burning and burning, for it never knows how to quit. This, of course, is contrary to human nature, which says, "I'm sick and tired of waiting and believing. If that person doesn't come around pretty soon, I'm finished with this relationship."

2) Love is KIND.

This means *to be adaptable or compliant to the needs of others*. You go out of your way to be sensitive to, and responsive to the one you love. You *want* to bend over backwards to become what others need you to be for them! Thus, the word "kind" portrays *a willingness to serve and to change in order to meet the needs of others*. This is completely opposite of selfishness and self-centeredness.

Modern Description: ***"... Love doesn't demand others to be like itself; rather, it is so focused on the needs of others that it bends over backwards to become what others need it to be...."***

Real *agape* love doesn't think of itself first. Instead, it is always reaching out, thinking and focusing primarily on the needs of others. The person walking in *agape* love adapts to those around him in order to touch them, help them, and impact them in a meaningful way.

3) Love is NOT JEALOUS.

ILLY: Playing Bingo, when someone else yells "Bingo!" what is your first thought?

"Envieth not." Or, not jealous. This word "envy" portrays *a person who is radically consumed with his own desires and plans*. This is a person so bent on getting his own way that he is willing to sacrifice anything or anyone to get it. You might describe this person as being ambitious and self-centered. He is so consumed with himself that he doesn't ever think of the needs or desires of others. His own plans are paramount in his mind, and everyone else come after him.

Modern Description: ***"... Love is not ambitious, self-centered, or so consumed with itself that it never thinks of the needs or desires that others possess...."***

ILLY: Do you see why this kind of love can't be self-manufactured? It is our human nature to seek and meet our own needs first.

ILLY: Romantic love without *agape* love is a mess! Envy and Jealousy ruin many a relationship ... which is why God's love is the foundation for marital love, and why marriage to a growing disciple of Jesus is a very wise choice.

4. Love is NOT BOASTFUL.

The word "vaunteth" means *a lot of self talk*. In other words, it describes *a person who endlessly promotes himself and exaggerates his own virtues*. His self-promotion is so outrageous that he is usually prone to exaggeration that borders on lying.

Modern Description: ***"... Love doesn't go around talking about itself all the time, constantly exaggerating and embellishing the facts to make it look more important in the sight of others...."***

Agape love wants to focus on the accomplishments of others in order to build them up and make them feel more valuable and secure. Remember, *agape* isn't a self-focused love—it is focused on giving of itself in order to meet other people's needs.

5. Love is NOT PROUD.

Puffed-up = NOT PROUD. The picture is of a person SWOLLEN with pride, with an air of superiority. This person is snooty and snobbish. Don't be that person!

Modern Description: ***"... Love does not behave in a prideful, arrogant, haughty, superior, snooty, snobbish, or clannish manner."***

6. Love is NOT RUDE.

How I interact with people is a reflection of my love for them. Don't be *ugly* with people! That doesn't look or feel like love at all.

Modern Description: ***"Love is not rude and discourteous—it is not careless or thoughtless, nor does it carry on in a fashion that would be considered insensitive to others...."***

I can be rude sometimes, honestly. I don't *intend* to be, but I can be disinterested in another person's point of view to the point of being ugly and rude. That's not love.

7. Love does not DEMAND ITS OWN WAY.

This word was used to describe someone in the court system who is so upset about not getting what he wanted that he sues to get his demands met. Instead of taking no for an answer, this person is so intent on getting his own way that he will search,

seek, and investigate, never giving up in his pursuit to get what he wants. In fact, he's so bent on getting his way that he'll twist the facts; look for loopholes; put words in other people's mouths.

Manipulation and love do not mix.

Modern Description: ***"... Love does not manipulate situations or scheme and devise methods that will twist situations to its own advantage...."***

8. Love is NOT IRRITABLE.

The King James translation is really good here, "not easily provoked." That word *provoked* is a compound of "alongside" and "poke, prick, or stab." The idea is of a person running along side of you constantly poking you in the side with something sharp.

That would be irritating! But, somehow, agape love is not *easily* provoked or irritated. And neither does it seek to poke or provoke others!

Modern Description: *"... Love does not deliberately engage in actions or speak words that are so sharp, they cause an ugly or violent response...."*

9. Love does NOT KEEP A RECORD OF WRONGS.

This is a simple accounting term that means to count or credit someone's account.

Before us is the image of a bookkeeper who meticulously keeps accurate financial records. But in this case, the bookkeeper is an offended person who keeps detailed records of every wrong that was ever done to him. That's not *agape* love.

You see, that is how real *agape* love behaves. So if you are ever tempted to keep mental records of wrongs someone has done to you, be aware that you're not giving to that person the same mercy God has given to you. Someone who has been forgiven as much as you have been forgiven has no right to keep a record of someone else's mistakes!

Modern Description: *"... Love does not deliberately keep records of wrongs or past mistakes."*

10. Love wants TRUTH TO WIN.

This means "taking no joy" in something bad happening. *Agape* love never says, "Good, I'm glad that happened, he got what he deserved."

Modern Description: *"Love does not feel overjoyed when it sees an injustice done to someone else...."* and the second part is *"... Love is elated, thrilled, ecstatic, and overjoyed with the truth."*

11. Love NEVER GIVES UP.

This is a word from the building trades which means "to cover" like with a "solidly built roof." The idea is, we are safe here ... covered by love, and because of that, I'll never give up.

Modern Description: *"Love protects, shields, guards, covers, conceals, and safeguards people from exposure..."*

12. Love NEVER LOSES FAITH.

Agape love isn't stupid, nor is it blind. It sees everything—the good, the bad, and the ugly. But because *agape* is so filled with faith, it pushes the disconcerting, disturbing, negative realities out of the way. This doesn't mean *agape* ignores problems or challenges. It just makes a choice to see beyond the problems and conflicts, to strain forward to see the highest potential that resides in every person.

Let's apply this to your children. Perhaps it is true that they are having problems right now or that they have done some things in the past they shouldn't have done. But there is still hope! Today is a new day, and *agape* simply cannot give up believing that they will turn around!

Modern Description: *"... Love strains forward with all its might to believe the very best in every situation...."*

13. Love is ALWAYS HOPEFUL.

Love involves an expectation of good things, it is filled with an anticipation.

Modern Description: ***"... Love always expects and anticipates the best in others and the best for others...."***

14. Love ENDURES through the tough times.

This word endure comes from two words: "under" and "stay." The sense is of a person who is under a heavy load but refuses to surrender to defeat.

I'm straining and staying *right here*.

This means *agape* never quits or throws in the towel. It simply doesn't know how to quit. Real *agape* says, "I'm committed to be here—to stay with you and to work it out, regardless of the cost or the time involved. I am not quitting. I am here to stay!"

Modern Description: ***"... Love never quits, never surrenders, and never gives up."***

This is very different than "seeking and demanding its own way" from verse 5!

One more description ... but first, how are you doing? If this were a test (it's not) would you be passing? Remember, it's not about YOU. On your own, on my own I am a lousy lover. I'm selfish, and rude, and not very patient. But, I'm not on my own! Neither are you, because GOD IS LOVE and you're in relationship with God through Jesus ... which is great because, love never fails and it lasts forever.

15. Love LASTS FOREVER.

This phrase "charity never faileth" is a very old word that refers to a person who has *from a high position*. It was also used on rare occasions to depict *a warrior who fell in battle*.

Romantic love fails, falters, and doesn't last forever.

God's love never disappoints. *Agape* always wins.

I'd like for us to close the sermon by reading this passage together, can we do that? In your bulletin there's an insert that contains all of the Modern Descriptions strung together. Let's read it!

"Love patiently and passionately bears with others for as long as patience is needed; Love doesn't demand others to be like itself; rather, it is so focused on the needs of others that it bends over backwards to become what others need it to be;

Love is not ambitious, self centered, or so consumed with itself that it never thinks of the needs or desires that others possess;

Love doesn't go around talking about itself all the time, constantly exaggerating and embellishing the facts to make it look more important in the sight of others; Love does not behave in a prideful, arrogant, haughty, superior, snooty, snobbish, or clannish manner;

Love is not rude and discourteous—it is not careless or thoughtless, nor does it carry on in a fashion that would be considered insensitive to others;

Love does not manipulate situations or scheme and devise methods that will twist situations to its own advantage;

Love does not deliberately engage in actions or speak words that are so sharp, they cause an ugly or violent response;

Love does not deliberately keep records of wrongs or past mistakes;

Love does not feel overjoyed when it sees an injustice done to someone else but is elated, thrilled, ecstatic, and overjoyed with the truth;

Love protects, shields, guards, covers, conceals, and safeguards people from exposure; Love strains forward with all its might to believe the very best in every situation; Love always expects and anticipates the best in others and the best for others; Love never quits, never surrenders, and never gives up; Love never disappoints, never fails, and never lets anyone down."

So after pondering these verses, what is your answer? Are you walking in this kind of love? Have you achieved the level of love that God wants you to have in your life? Do you manifest this type of love to others who are around you? Or do you now see that you still have areas in your life where you need to grow, develop, and change in regard to walking in love?

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, lover of my soul, mark me down as a person who loves like You do. Enough of my brand of love ... let me embrace Your way completely. In Jesus' name, amen."