

LOVE

(ἀγαπάω = 'agapaho')

To love, to love dearly, to be well pleased with, to be contented with, to love deeply, unconditionally and constantly.

Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.” Love has its perfect expression in the relationship between Christ and His church. In this verse, ἀγαπάω is used in reference to husbands (the masculine). This is interesting because the wife is not told to ἀγαπέ her husband but to “respect” him (verse 33). 1 Corinthians 11:7 states, *“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.”* If the man is the glory of God, then the husband is the one who must take the initiative and “love” the way Christ loved. Can see a principle unfolding here? The husband is expected to release the love of God, and the wife is required to respond to his love by respecting and honouring him. He shines his love onto her, and she then shines it back! She cannot receive his glory unless his glory has first radiated from him. Notice, the woman is a ‘reflector’ of the man’s glory. And this is the same with regards his love.

Titus 2:4 says, ***“That they (the older woman) may teach the young mothers to be sober, to love (φιλέω) their husbands, to love (φιλέω) their children.”*** Here we see that the wife is taught by her mother to respond to her husband's love. The word φιλέω (‘phileo’) is to be distinguished from ἀγαπάω (‘agapaho’) in this, that ‘phileo’ more than often represents “tender affection.” Therefore, the wife’s response to the husband’s ‘agape’ is “tender affection” (‘phileo’). In a marriage setting, ‘agape’ is masculine and ‘phileo’ is feminine. The husband ought to love (‘agape’) his wife as Jesus loves His church (His bride)! The husband should give of himself for his wife in everything - as Christ did for His Church! The husband should speak the Word of God over his wife to edify and encourage her. In response, the wife must respect, honour and admire her husband just as she respects, honours and admires Jesus her Saviour! And, by faith she ought to see her husband becoming a replica of Jesus. Only then can she get the husband she's believed God for.

As we’ve seen from the above exposition the word ἀγαπέ (‘agape’) has such a distinctive meaning that it is very difficult to find a general definition. Love can only be known by the actions it prompts. God’s love is seen in the wonderful gifts He has given to mankind – the gift of His Son and the gift of His Spirit. This special kind of love, that is completely unconditional, expresses the deep and constant affection God has towards unworthy people. *Agape*, is unique in that it’s based entirely on the character of God, not on the worthiness or qualifications of the person at the receiving end. And it is certainly not based on the feelings one may or may not have when dispensing love. The feelings are optional, they may come and go, but the God kind of love is eternal, and will never change.