

Biblical Love – Part One

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
John 13:34-35

Biblically, love is never a feeling; it is always an act of obedience; it is the exercising of the will. The words feel/feeling appear only a few times in Scripture, and never in connection with love. The Bible does not prohibit feelings of love for others, but nothing in Scripture suggests that it should be present. Eros deals with feelings of love and passion, and you cannot find this word in the Bible.

Song of Solomon may be considered an exception, but if so you should consider the following:

- Admiration and affection can as easily be considered an act of the will as an emotional feeling. The Bible never speaks negatively regarding emotion. It merely suggests that a lack of emotion can never be an excuse for disobeying a command.

- Historically, the church has never been in agreement regarding how to interpret this book of the Bible. It is so unique in the canon that interpreters rarely speak on it, not knowing if it is an allegory of God's love for His own, or a love poem of King Solomon.

In today's culture, love between a man and a woman is almost exclusively understood as a feeling of emotion as well as an essential component in marriage and commitment; if eros is not present, people do not want to marry. Such thinking is a distortion of biblical teaching that invariably leads to sin.

Biblical Love – Part Two

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John 13:34-35

Let us once again review the three most common Greek words for love:

Agape – This word is the least used of the three in Greek literature and the most used in Biblical literature. It is as though the New Testament writers took an obscure Greek word and gave it a biblical definition. Agape seeks the best interest of others rather than self. On occasion, but not always, it requires self-sacrifice. It is an attribute that God uses to define Himself: "God is love."¹ God requires that the believer agape all people, including his enemies.

Eros – This word is the most used of the three in Greek literature and is absent in Biblical literature. It seeks to use others for the benefit of self. It is a consuming, almost irrational passion that satisfies human appetites. It is antithetical to everything the Bible teaches.

Phileo – This word is common in both Greek and Biblical literature and has the idea of treating others as your own family, brotherly love. Thus the city of Philadelphia.

Agape seeks what is best for others and requires exercising the will. I may not feel like seeking another's best, but I exercise my will in the direction of doing it. Eros seeks what is best for self and requires surrendering the will to passion. Agape is governed by God's commandments; this is why agape is a biblical command. Eros is governed by the appetites; this is why eros is never mentioned in the Bible and is contrary to the Law of God and all that the Bible holds sacred.

Although Scripture never mentions eros, God does not specifically forbid it. Rather, He insists that it must be subservient to agape and never be practiced at the expense of His commandments. Most men, when considering a wife, make their decision on the basis of, "Will she make a good bed partner?" and "Will she show well, i.e., will she make me look good?" It rarely occurs to them to ask, "Will she be a good mother of our children?"

This means that young people base courtship and marriage on eros, while rarely giving careful consideration to agape. Christian men do not marry to meet the needs of their wives; they marry to meet their own needs. If they are godly men, they begin to reflect on God's command that they agape their wives and look to Him for the meeting of their needs. Unfortunately, there are very few godly men.

¹ 1 John 4:8