



Alêtheia
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
November 14, 2021
“God is Love”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Wednesday Nights at Alêtheia 6:30

Christmas Party December 10, 6:00 - See Karen Dalton

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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Perhaps the biggest hindrance to Love for one another within each local church family, and then the global church family beyond, is our individual _____.

You can think that eating meat sacrificed to an idol is no big deal, but if that belief causes division, strife, and disunity in the church...
(I Corinthians 8, Luke 17:1).

The ideas, beliefs, and opinions you hold dear, are not yours. Don't be possessive of them, don't get defensive about them. If a better idea comes along...

I JOHN 4:1-6 ~ 7Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

John may have used little words over and over, but in every case...

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Verse 7: “Let us love one another,” is ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους (ä-gä-pō-mĕn ä-l-lā-lūs). The verb “Love” is in the 1) present: 2) active: 3) subjunctive: 4) first person: 5) plural:

Where is reciprocity mentioned?

Always in the Bible we get teaching, followed by exhortation, followed by motivation.

Motivation or reason 1, “Love is from God.”

Here it is ἀγάπη (ä-gä-pā)...

Unconditional...

Altruistic...

Motivation or reason 2, makes explicit what was implied in the first one...

Our concrete love for one another proves that God’s love for us, has had its intended effect.

Verse 8 restates as the complete opposite. Christianity cannot possibly be distanced from _____. (I Corinthians 13:1, Jude 12).

Why? Well, because God is Agapê. Is that ontological or descriptive?

Verse 9: God’s love for us was no more theoretical than our love is supposed to be for _____.

Title, not biology, μονογενής (mō-nō-gĕ-nās).

The word “Sent” is the same from which we get the word _____. It means to commission. (Romans 5:8).

Propitiation, ἱλασμός (hē-lās-mōs), is a technical term that means the deity is _____.

Verse 11 means that it’s our obligation as a member of God’s family, but it should really be our _____ and seen as our _____.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

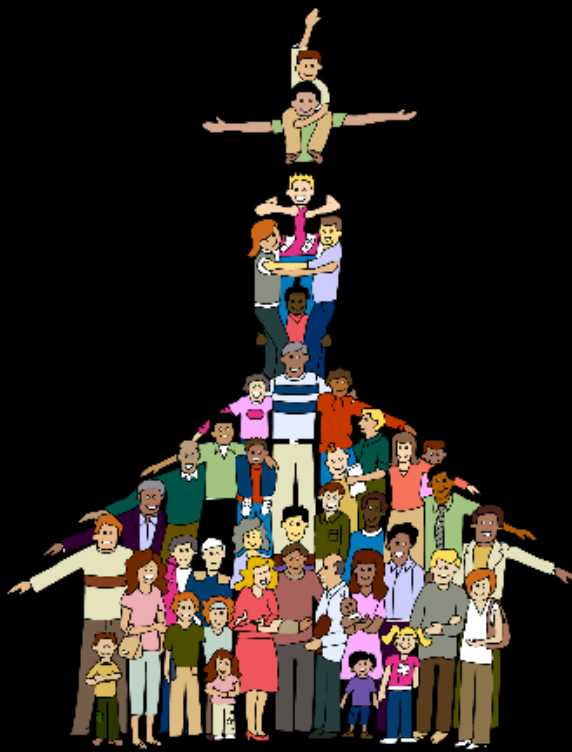
Phone _____ Email _____

 **lêtheia**
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



1 John

Love one  another



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If you haven't figured it out yet, this Letter is all about the church - you and me - reflecting God's Love to each other - all of us - as the church. It is about each and every Christian person fellowshiping properly within the greater Body of Christ as they actually, relationally, concretely, do so in the local Body of Christ to whom they belong.

Perhaps the biggest hindrance to Love for one another within each local church family and also the church family beyond is our individual opinions.



It's all the ideas, beliefs, practices, doctrines, traditions, attitudes, preferences, and feelings that so divide us.

Last week was all about distinguishing God's Holy and Pure Truth from human opinions.



John being John, and making things as black and white as possible so that people can easily understand, categorizes all information as coming from only one of two sources. It is either God's Truth or it is Satan's lies. Any reasonable person would say, the vast majority of ideas must fall somewhere between those two extremes.

Not when those opinions, ideas, or bits of information negatively affect the Body of Christ. You can think that eating meat sacrificed to an idol is no big deal, but if

that belief causes division, strife, and disunity in the church - it's an idea from the pit of hell. I could just as easily say that the one offended by the first person's freedom is the one holding an opinion from hell. Whoever the person is, who is unwilling to yield, is the person who is, at best, immature and as the Apostle Paul said, "Weak" (I Corinthians 8). That principle applies to a whole lot more than food. As Jesus tells us, "It is inevitable that conflict and division will come, but woe to him through whom it comes." (Luke 17:1).



So, last week we talked extensively about ideas - about Truth and how to discern what is True and what is false. In that, I stated that for the vast majority of

people, what they think they know, understand, accept, and embrace, is not their own discovery, but rather is something some other person taught them. Yes, I'm talking about all of us. We like to think that we figure things out on our own, but it simply isn't true. We are exposed to ideas in a wide variety of ways and many times are completely unaware of the influence things have on us.

Sir Isaac Newton is considered by many people to be the smartest person to ever live - excluding Jesus, of course. Newton is credited with inventing calculus. Now you know who to blame. He is best known for his Laws of Motion. He formulated the Laws of Gravitation. He was a mathematician, physicist, astronomer, theologian, philosopher, and prolific author. Some call him the Father of the Enlightenment. He was one of those exceedingly rare original thinkers - he came up with stuff no one had thought of before and he described himself by saying "If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants."

Even for Newton, nearly everything he knew was learned from others. My point? The ideas, beliefs, and opinions you hold dear, are not yours.



Don't be possessive of them, don't get defensive about them. If a better idea comes along, jettison the old idea with glee, instead of holding to it because you want to honor some dead person, or you don't want to admit that you were wrong - be happy to have your ideas improved!

Then what remains is Truth, and as Truth, it can never be defeated. Fear not, let your ideas be refined into purer Truth and then realize that you don't own that either... The implication? Freely share the Truth that has stood the test of time. Never let your opinions create disunity in Christ's church.



1 John 4:7-11, 7Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

That's cool. If we're honest, it's also simplistic and repetitive. No, it's not - not at all simplistic and only

seemingly repetitive. John used little words over and over, but in every case, he made subtle changes in the inflection of the words and the syntax of his phrasing to make profound points. This small passage confirms many orthodox Christian doctrines with such nuance as to be missed by the casual observer. What do you say we dig in?

Verse 7 again starts with confirmation that God is talking to Christians.



That is followed by a command. The command is to love one another. It is ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους (ä-gä-pō-

mĕn ä-lā-lüs). The verb “Love” is in the 1) present, 2) active, 3) subjunctive, 4) first person, 5) plural.

Why would I bother you with that? Well, because it’s a bit unusual and it adds a ton of clarifying information. I will not get too technical, but the...

1) Present part means that it is something that must persist... Something is being done now, and it needs to be continued in the future - keep on keeping on.

2) Active, means the one’s addressed - Christians - need to actively accomplish the activity.

3) Subjunctive means that the activity is desired and potential - it is what should be done and it’s possible for it to be done.

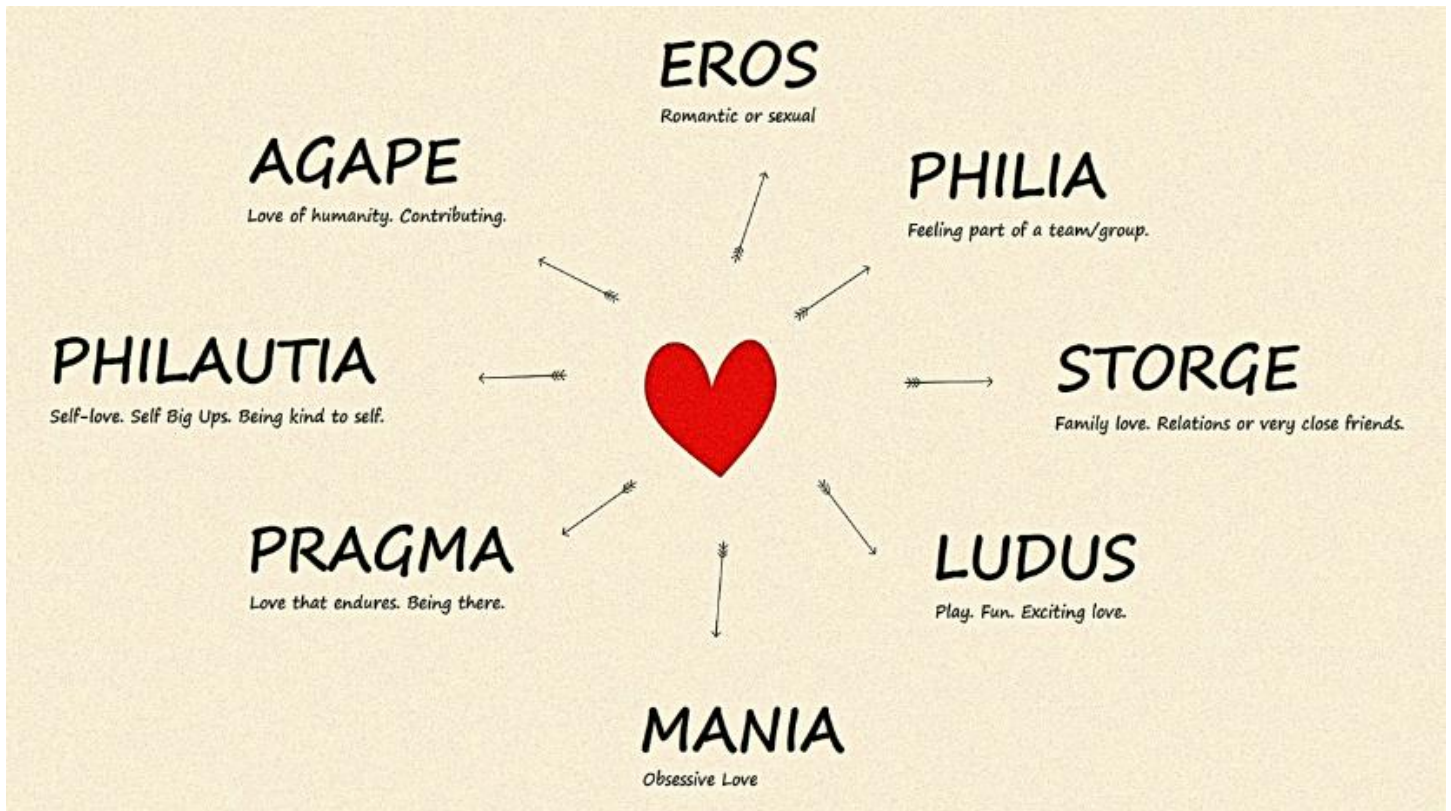
4&5) First person plural is “We.” John includes himself in the command to make it universally applicable to all Christians. “Let us love,” is not bad, even though it makes me think of salad... “Let us.” It’s more words, but the MSG makes the point clear with “Let us continue to love,” it means, “Let us go on loving.” Go on loving who? The second word can only mean our fellow Christians. There’s no other way to understand John’s command, which is a restatement of Jesus’ command to him personally.

The Bible often talks about loving God and loving the lost, but neither of those ideas are being stressed here. This is, “My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us go on loving each other within our church family.” The kicker? Nowhere is reciprocity mentioned. It isn’t, reciprocate the love other Christians have for you - it’s love them regardless of how they act or react.

Love, we’ll see in a moment, because that’s who you are, not because of what you’ll get. Well, now, that’s three words down.

After the command we get the motivation. Always in the Bible we get the teaching and that’s followed by the exhortation or the command, which itself is followed by the motivation.

Motivation or reason 1, “Love is from God.” There is a single letter Greek word left untranslated because it doesn’t fit English grammar. It’s “The.” Actually, two of them are untranslated. The phrase is more like, “Because the Agapê exists emanating from the God.” I’ve often talked about love, and I think we better have a brief review since the word family appears 15 times in the next 6 verses.



There are basically eight Greek words we would translate as “Love.” In reality, there are many more words that stand in for love in Greek as well as additional phrases that convey the meaning of our word “Love.”

That’s especially crazy when you consider that English is a language with a massive vocabulary. Most of us have a speaking vocabulary of 20,000 words and a listening vocabulary of 40,000 words. In contrast, if you know 1,000 Greek words you know all the words of the New Testament that occur 10 or more times. Greek is complex in other ways. My point is you would think that

if Greek has eight different words to define aspects of “Love,” English should have over 300 words that mean “Love.” Weird. Obviously, love was not big with the Anglo-Saxon originators of English.

The ancient Greek people are still renowned the world over for their philosophy. Philosophy requires precision of ideas and so exactness of words.

The word we’re interested in today is ἀγάπη (ä-gä-pā). Agapê was the philosophical ideal of a perfect love not tainted by emotion. Think about what that means. I have conducted a number of weddings. Each time the bride and groom were deeply in love emotionally. I’m sorry to say that many of those unions ended in hatred - another closely related emotion - downright hatred for the person to whom each previously proclaimed, “For better or worse. Until death do us part. So help me God.” Human love is a fickle love because it is actually a love of self. It is a love for how we feel when in the company of that other person - an emotional feeling that we mistake for a devotion to that other person. Mariah and I, enjoy the T.V. show “The Voice.” It would be difficult to count the number of times per episode that the coaches, the contestants, and the audience

members say, "I love you." Clearly what they mean by the sentence is, "You are making me feel good right now." The devotion called love is for as long and to the degree that the other person makes me feel better. The break occurs when I think that I would feel better without them around, than I do with them around. When the other person stops providing the better feeling... Well, the only thing holding the relationship together then is guilt, duty, and simply being trapped without any better options. Trapped in a loveless marriage for appearance's sake.

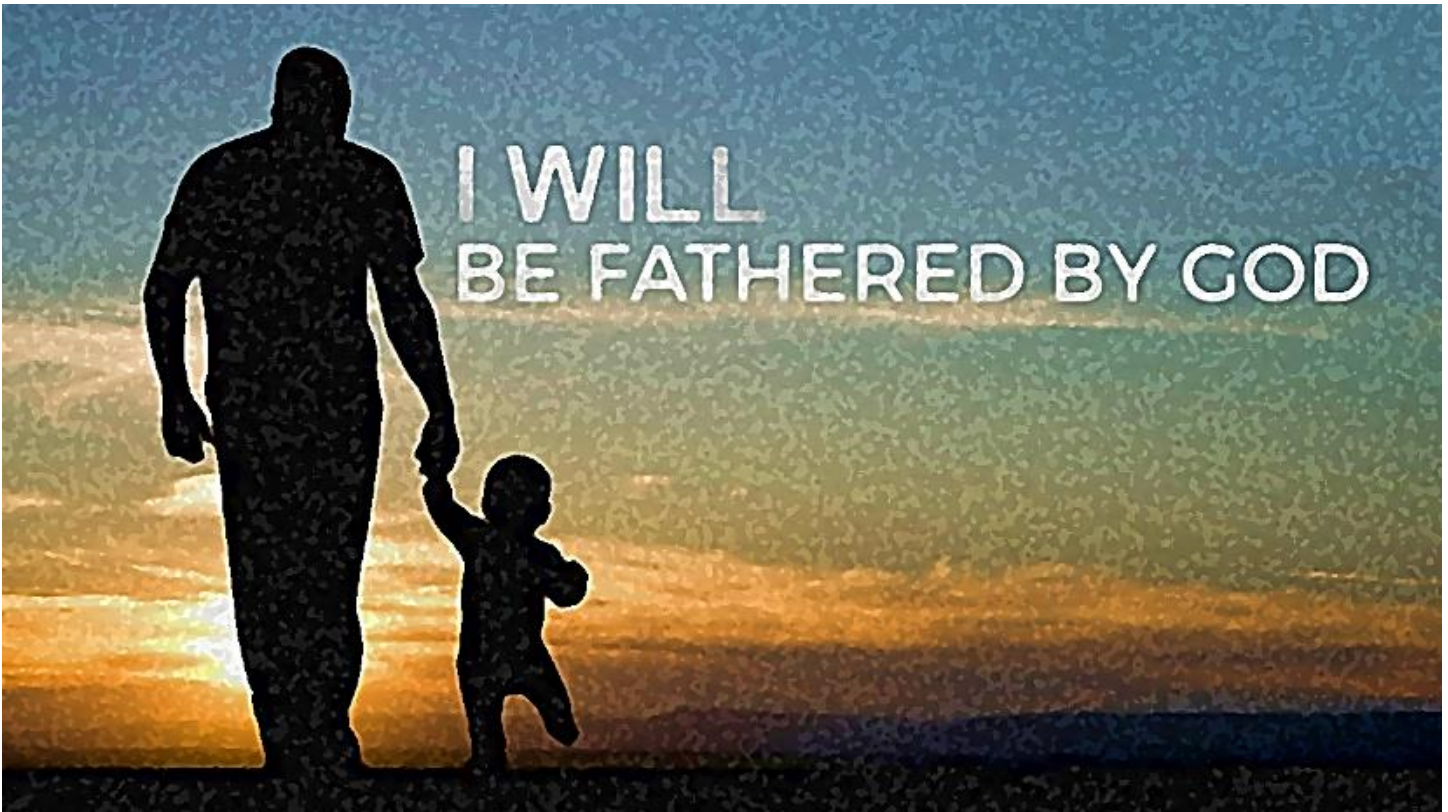
Well, that's bleak and fortunately God is not like that. God's love is not like that at all. God is a God of order and stability and constancy - the same yesterday, today and forever. His love must necessarily be just as solid as He, Himself is. Agapê, according to the Greek philosophers was a love that mankind should strive for, but ultimately was out of reach. It was too perfect - too much to ask from a mortal - it requires far too much nobility, virtue, faithfulness, integrity, and righteousness.

It is, by very definition, unconditional. I think we forget what that word unconditional means. It means that the

love we're talking about is not conditioned by anything. Not by the lovability of the object being loved, nor by any other forces - it is un-conditional. Therefore, no, past, present, or future attractiveness of the loved, nor any benefit to the lover, is involved. It cannot have anything to do with the loved one's performance, value, or reciprocity of love. Unconditional love is a choice to love another based upon the character of the lover, not the worthiness of the loved.

It is altruistic, which means not only perfectly selfless, but self-sacrificing. That perfectly selflessly sacrificial love is not found in humanity. Those who say it is, can only do so, by watering down what altruism means. This unconditional, altruistic love can only come from a perfect God because it is as unwavering, as only He can be. Talk about faithfulness... That's the source.

The first motivation to love one another is that the kind of love we are to use in that endeavor to fulfill that command is not human - it can only come from God Himself. The subtle point is that we are His children, filled with His Spirit, and so His Agapê can flow into and through us to the others in our family.



The second motivation makes explicit what was implied in the first one. Everyone is again an all-inclusive term all people without exception who Agapê can only do so because they are Christians in whom God has poured out His love. So, true Christians who are actively acting like who they are.

To be “Born of God” is one thing and to choose to be “Fathered by God,” is something more. Every person who Agapês can only do so because they embrace the fact that Almighty God has fathered them. They choose to act in accordance with their true Father. They are part of His family and so have His character... This is

about character resulting in concrete actions, not concrete actions creating character.

If I, through my human power, serve others, it proves that I'm able to put others first at least sometimes and, in some ways - that's all. If though, I have a new character birthed in me at my rebirth from God my Father and from that new character my loving service to others flows naturally, it proves that I am His child. Such behavior, which is so alien to my former character, so unnatural to my human nature, demonstrates that I has been Fathered by God and that I am a legitimate member of His family.

If that is true, it can only be understood relationally. By definition it is relational. Relationships can only ever be as close and as real as the transparency between the parties. The Christian who embraces God's love for them and then turns around and allows His love to flow from them to their fellow siblings in our family is the person who demonstrates their parentage, but also who knows their Father.



It is much easier to become a son than to be one

There are many, sad to say, Christians who do not know our Father very well at all. Please do not be one of them.

This is much the same as forgiveness. According to God, we are forgiven to the degree that we forgive others. Why? It is because our forgiveness of others proves that God's forgiveness of us has had its intended effect. Similarly, our concrete love for one another starting in our own local church family proves that God's love for us has had its intended effect.

Are you motivated yet? Verse 8 restates what was just said with a strong adversative. It couldn't be more striking. This is the complete opposite. This is failing to concretely love one another. That failure, all by itself proves to God, proves to the church, proves to Satan and his horde of miscreants, proves to everyone, except perhaps to yourself, that you do not know your Heavenly Father at all.



Christianity cannot possibly be distanced from Agapê. From selfless sacrificial service to others without becoming resentful because you're acting as a member of God's family in His power. If that is too others oriented for you, might I suggest, that you get

that straight with God. By that, I mean allow God to straighten you out. Because that's the most important thing in life as a Christian. Get everything else perfectly correct and fail at just this one thing and you are a "Resounding gong," "A clanging cymbal," "A cloud without rain" Miss just this one thing and your Christian walk is like "autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, and uprooted" to boot (I Corinthians 13:1, Jude 12).

Then John gives us the why. Why does Agapê prove that we know our Father, while the opposite proves that we do not? Well, because God is Agapê.



GOD IS LOVE

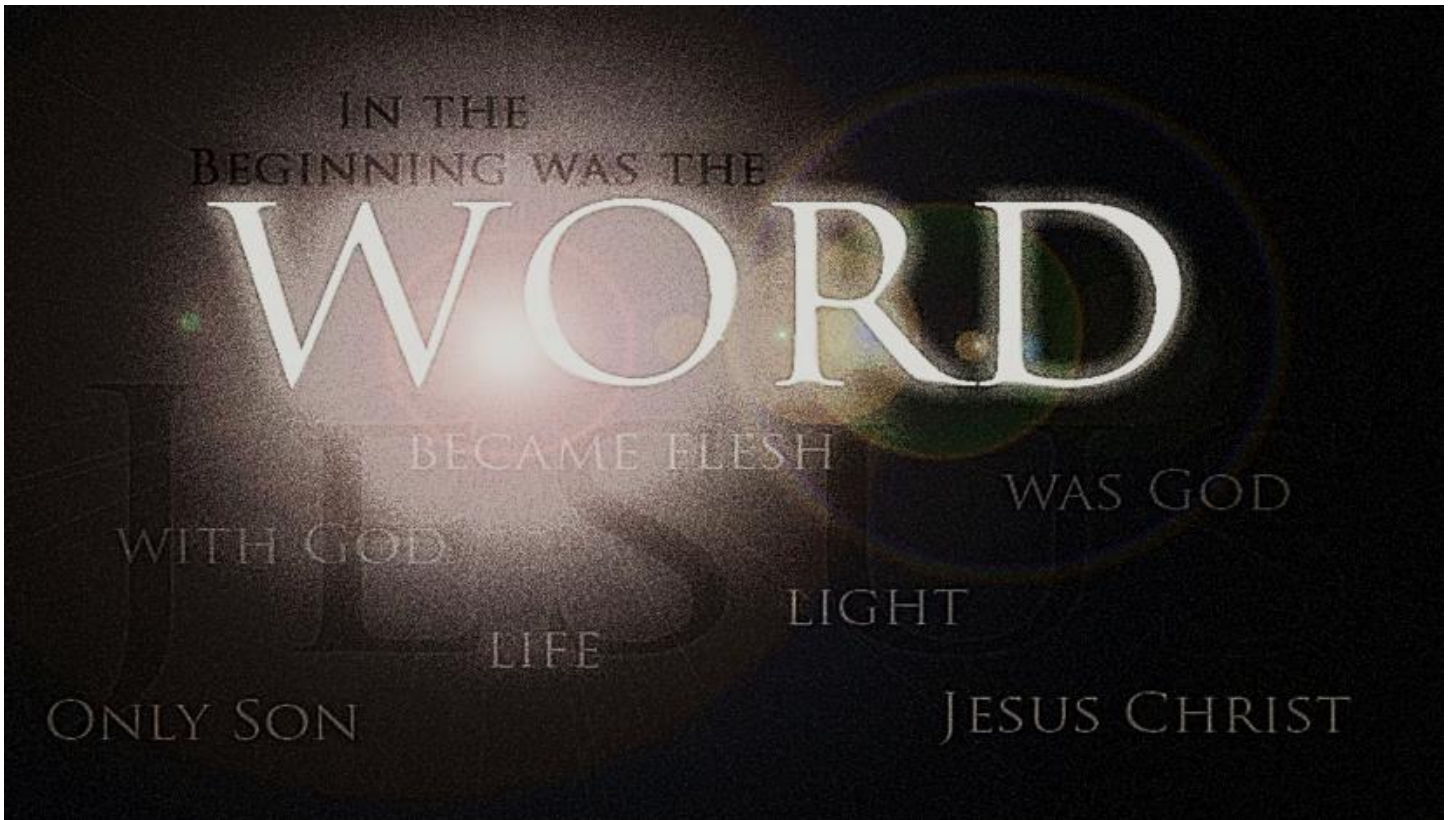
This is a well-worn phrase. Even agnostics, atheists, pagans, and demons, know this one, even if it's only to use it against God's children. "God is love."

The age-old question is whether this statement is ontological or descriptive. This is who God is, true enough, but what do we mean by that? Is God and Agapê the same? I think you'll see that they are not. The easiest way to recognize that is to reverse the statement. God is love - okay - good. Love is God? No, not at all. This is a statement about God's essential character, not His essential being.

It actually makes God's love all the more remarkable. If God and love were synonyms, then God would have no choice in the matter - He would love because He couldn't choose to do otherwise. Since this describes God's character it is His choice to love and that is the choice that He made and since He is immutable - unchanging and unchangeable, His love is as steadfast as He is. That's the Father of us... How then should we be?

Verse 9 is big. John was not merely giving philosophical proverbs... God's love for us was no

more theoretical than our love is supposed to be for one another. He demonstrated in actual concrete, undeniable, physical action what kind of character He has. His Agapê was manifested in our reality as He intervened in the affairs of mankind.



God's Agapê was physically manifested for all to see in the actual historical figure of Jesus Christ our Lord. Here called by His title, not His biological position, μονογενής (mō-nō-gě-nās). It can mean "Only begotten son," as older translations have it, but in this context, it means unique one. "One and only," is a reasonable translation. The phrasing here and elsewhere makes it clear that the Father's Son Jesus was entirely unique.

The word “Sent” is the same from which we get the word Apostle. It means to commission and send someone as an envoy, or ambassador. They are sent with the authority of the sender for a purpose - they are on the sending party’s mission.

Of course, we know that He is the Word of God, better the Message of God, coequal from all eternity with the Father, as well as the Spirit, He Himself is uncreated God. Well, we see that in the sending. God cannot commission someone to be sent, if the someone does not yet exist. Why does the Bible use the anthropomorphic relational construct of Father and Son?

This actually confuses people concerning the Trinity and not just Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses. People have a hard time wrapping their head around a coequal, uncreated, person of the Trinity being called Son. To many it implies that the Father is the creator or at least the parent and therefore superior or at least senior to the Son.

The Word became flesh by allowing Himself to be conceived in the body of a human mother and in that sense the Will of God is the Father of the Word of God. We can go a step further. As eternal partners, we could imprecisely say, in perfect unified harmony together, the Will of God handing over the Word of God was so painful the only way we humans could get even an inkling of the magnitude of that sacrifice is to see it as a father giving up his one and only son to be brutalized, shamed, and murdered in order to help a bunch of strangers who had turned their backs on him. Imagine.

Paul wrote in Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

One of the things we hear bandied about in Christian circles is the idea that if you were the only person to accept Christ’s sacrifice, God would have still done it. Well, it’s true and misleading. It’s misleading because it elevates you - giving you the sense that you could have been all that mattered to God. It also diminishes the sacrifice because if you’re that special, God’s getting a bargain. It’s true in this sense... God would

have done precisely what He did even if no one accepted.

This is about His character not the outcome of His actions. God will be Who He is regardless of how anyone reacts to Him. That's a lesson for us all.

Verse 10 is quite similar to the Romans verse. The emphasis here is on what I just said. God did not do what He did because of us, He did it because that's Who He is. He chose to selflessly sacrifice what was most precious to Him in order to provide a way for human beings to be reborn as His very own children forevermore.

Please get this bit of orthodox Christian teaching. God did not save you because He thought it would be worth it. He didn't say to Himself, well, this is going to be incredibly painful right now, but I'll reap big rewards in the future. God is, as I already said today, immutable. If God got something from you, or me, or even from all the Christians throughout all time, He would be different after He got it than He was beforehand. That's impossible!



His choice to Love unconditionally sent the Word of God to the Cross. That selfless sacrifice on Christ's part has propitiated God entirely. Propitiation, ἱλασμός (hē-lās-mōs), is a technical term that means the deity is satisfied. Greek people would anger the gods and those petulant man-made gods would pour out their wrath on mankind until they were satisfied and then the punishment would stop. The way you got it to stop faster was to offer the gods something. If it was a worthy sacrifice they would be propitiated - satisfied.

With the one true God, mankind weighed Him and found Him wanting, is how the Bible describes our

collective turning our back on Him and going our own way. Right relationship was murdered. That's the end of it and if God was as mercenary and childish as we are - as the manmade gods of the Greeks and Romans were, He would have sat back and said, fine, work it out for yourselves.

But that is not the God of the Bible. The true God from His character of love acted unilaterally. The Father sent the Word, His unique Son to pay the price no human could ever pay. God the Father was completely satisfied with what God the Son accomplished and the proof of that fact is the bodily Resurrection and then Ascension back into Heaven.

All the sin of all mankind, throughout all time, has been paid for in full. From God's side of the equation, all is forgiven. If that were the end of the story, there would be no need to further interfere in the affairs of man. No need to inspire the Bible writers, no need for church and long-winded preachers. Everyone's going to Heaven no matter what.

But that's not the end of the story because forgiveness while available must be activated by each individual completing the transaction.

If I give you a gift that you refuse to accept, the gift was given sure enough, but you will never benefit from that gift. Please make certain that you accept the gift actually offered to you by God by proving its activation in you by loving these around you.

Verse 11 means that it's our obligation as a member of God's family, but it should really be our desire and our privilege. See loving others as the blessing that it is - a blessing to God, to the church, ultimately to the world, but perhaps even more, a blessing to you.