THE PRINCIPLES PERTAINING TO LOVE INCLUDING AGAPE LOVE

We live in a world of great uncertainty and mistrust. Many individuals have been robbed and have been emotionally damaged due to their trust and surrender of their “hearts” to fellow man. Many of us have either fallen in love or fallen out of love and I guess with that comes either fulfillment or pain. The love and care that man displays is one based on selfish needs and not sacrificial. Man has the ability to always “take’ and not give. The love of God however is not based on the needs but rather on sacrifice. Love is not viewed as an attribute of God, a quality in God, or a characteristic of God: Love is described as the essential nature of God’s being. God is Love.

Love is not a mere emotion: it is the state of the will, not merely a matter of feelings. Love that does not find expression in action on behalf of the person loved is only empty sound, signifying nothing.

Love for a person causes us to want to please him, to avoid doing things which annoy or offend him, to seek his highest welfare regardless of our own interests and to shield him from harm and evil.

1Jn 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.
1Jn 4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.
1Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Man on the other hand bases love on felt needs/emotions. Lets us look at the types of love that man embraces on the external:

It appears that, in New Testament times, there were at least four different Greek words that we translate as the English word ‘love’. This variety actually helps us in the work of translation because each of the four different Greek words carries a slightly different definition from the other three. This makes it a little clearer as to what the original means. These words were:

1. **Phileo** (verb) means "'to have ardent affection and feeling'—a type of impulsive love" (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1995, "Love"). This is the natural, human type of love and affection that we have for a friend and is often defined as "brotherly love."

This Greek word for love signifies, “...spontaneous natural affection, with more feeling than reason” (Elwell, p. 1357). Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance defines phileo as, “to be a friend to...fond of an individual or object; having affection for (as denoting attachment); a matter of sentiment or feeling”.

In John 21:15-16

, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him with the agapao type of love and Peter responded that he had the normal human phileo type of love for Him. Later, after receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter would be able to genuinely demonstrate agapao-type godly love, serving others throughout his lifetime and making the ultimate sacrifice in martyrdom.
2. **Eros** (noun) refers to sexual, erotic love or desire.

Eros says I love you and want you because you meet my need. Eros; A special intimate love between just two people for life; not to be shared or thrown about as is the trend today. When people in love become intimate they are joined in not just a physical act but joined in spirit. Hence the quote "Joined in the flesh" You will become one body.

True love, as explained in the Bible, isn't focused on oneself and one's feelings or emotions, but is instead outwardly focused on others —wanting to best serve and care for them. True love is beautifully described in

1 Corinthians 13:4-8
: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails"

3. **STORGE:** This is the type of love signifying the natural affection between kinfolk. This word appears only occasionally in the New Testament and only in compound form.

4. **AGAPE:** This Greek word for love is by far the one that appears most frequently in the New Testament. It is, “...generally assumed to mean moral goodwill which proceeds from esteem, principle, or duty, rather than attraction or charm... [it] means to love the undeserving, despite disappointment and rejection...Though agape has more to do with moral principle than with inclination or liking, it never means the cold religious kindness shown from duty alone, as scriptural examples abundantly prove”

Jesus said that loving one another is not an option for the believer; it is a commandment. However, His commandment came with an example of how it is to be fulfilled, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:34 ESV, cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:9).

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments” (1 John 5:1-2 ESV).

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jesus speaking in John 13:35 ESV)

This kind of love demands a sacrificial walk, one that is not based on felt needs but to love unconditionally. If we look at the world standards, one would see that the world seeks to take and take more to the point of hurt, paint and brokenness whilst the Love of Christ seeks to heal, restore, forgive and reconcile.

To love is to be effectively related to other people and to oneself in such a manner as to render them and ourselves more secure, to convey the feeling to others that we are all for them, that we are there to
support and cooperate with them. To love means to minister to, to satisfy the needs of other people. Simply put, to disadvantage oneself at the expense of another.

Jesus said to His disciples, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15 ESV). This means that those who love Jesus will want to please Him. We should want to please God, not as a means of trying to earn our salvation, but out of gratitude for what He has done in forgiving our sins.

Other places in the New Testament tell us that this desire to obey Jesus is a natural reaction from those who are His followers, “Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23 ESV; see also John 14:21; 2 John 1:6). It follows therefore, that those who do not obey Jesus, do not love Him and are thus not saved.

Hence we can firmly agree that the agape love that we must live by from our internal man validates our salvation but this is not based on our works but what Jesus Christ has done on the cross for all of man kind. John 3:16

True love must sometimes act in forceful ways. Agape love is a thinking, rational, kind of deliberate love that is motivated by what is holy and good. There are times when this kind of love results in less than pleasant actions. When speaking to the Corinthian church concerning a man engaged in unrepentant sin, the apostle Paul wrote these sobering words,“…you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 5:5 ESV). Agape love says that this man’s eternal soul is more important than his temporal comfort, therefore actions should be taken to help him realize the depth of his sin.

Examples of new testament passage pertaining to love:

1. The teachings of Christ : The necessity of indiscriminate love, even to enemies Matt 5:43-48
   - Love as the essence of the scriptures matt 22:36-40
   - A supreme demonstration and systematic discourse on love, Jhn chapters 13 – 15

2. The teachings of Paul
   - Love as fulfilling the law Rom 13:8
   - Love as the basis and motive for all actions 1 Cor 8:1-3 and chapters 8-10
   - Love as the supreme virtue and ingredient in the exercise of spiritual gifts. 1 Cor13

3. The teachings of John
   - Love in practical 1 jhn 3:11-18
   - The love of God in revelation and redemption Jhn 3:13-21
   - Love in a geometric angle of expression 1 jhn 3:21

The Characteristics of Love (1 Cor 13:4-7)

- Love is patient (macrothumeo) = to be long-suffering, slow to anger, slow to punish. It is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate. This shows how a loving person should behave when he or she is on the receiving end of offenses.
- Love is kind (chresteuomai) = to demonstrate grace and good nature; to act benevolently. This next quality shows us how a loving person should behave with he or she is on the giving end of the relationship.
_ Is not jealous (zeloo) = to passionately covet for one’s self the things which another person possesses; to burn with envy against another person. We might call this quality "selfish passion."

_ Love does not brag (perpereuomai) = to boast about one’s own greatness; to display one’s self prominently. This kind of attitude is often produced by a sense of superiority over others, and it expresses itself through feelings of contempt or disregard for others.

_ Is not arrogant (phusioo) = to be inflated, puffed up with pride, haughty. This is the same term that was used in 1 Cor 4:6, 18,

_ Does not act unbecomingly (aschemoneo) = to act in an inappropriate or unseemly manner. This is the verb form of the same word Paul had used in 1 Cor 12:23 to describe the less presentable members of the body which we keep covered from view.

_ It does not seek its own (zeteeo) = to seek one’s own interests as the primary concern. Paul used this same term when he made a similar statement in 1 Cor 10:24.

_ Is not provoked (paroxuno) = not to be easily irritated or goaded into anger and indignation; is not prone to violent outbursts or rage.

_ Does not take into account a wrong suffered (logizomai) = to keep a record of offenses. This term was actually an accounting or bookkeeping term, so it has the idea of keeping a detailed history or inventory of wrongs -- who did what to whom, and when and how.

_ Does not rejoice in unrighteousness (chairo) = to be glad or to take pleasure in injustice or what is wrong.

_ But rejoices with the truth = to be glad or take pleasure in what is true and right.

_ Bears all things (stego) = This Greek verb is related to the noun stege ("roof"), so the verb means to cover or protect.

_ Believes all things (pisteuo) = to place one’s faith or trust in the fact that God is in control of all things. Love is able to trust that the unexplained things in a relationship may have a positive explanation.

_ Hopes all things (elpizo) = to have a confident positive expectation or anticipation of good. The implication is that the person is trusting completely in God, so he does not constantly despair or wallow in negative expectation.

_ Endures all things (hupomeno) = literally, to remain under; to bear up under suffering or external circumstances that are unpleasant. The loving person suffers in silence without telling others all his personal troubles or giving way to selfishness under stress.

_ Love never fails (pipto) = to fall or fall away. Love never falls away; it always holds its place. Love is of permanent, lasting value throughout time and eternity. Love is an essential aspect of the character of God Himself, and it will continue to endure.

God loves all humanity unconditionally. We all have sinned (Romans 3:23). Only the self-righteous would dare say that God only loves certain people. The truth is that God loves everyone, which is why we read in 2nd Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” God is NOT willing that any should perish, not even the worst of criminals and villains.

The Old Testament tells us in Isaiah 55:7, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” God is willing to forgive any sinner who acknowledges their guilt of sin, for violating God’s holy Law, and who turns to Jesus Christ, believing upon the Savior to forgive their sins and save them. Salvation is of the Lord. Our part is simply to believe on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
1. Wikipedia – free encyclopedia
2. Module Christian ethics and morality - Teamwork
3. Strong’s Concordance
4. Nelsons bible dictionary
5. Steve Lewis – Love as a way of Life