Lost in translation…

It’s important to understand LOVE – it is tied to God’s character…

In our culture the word love is often used, but rarely understood.

Everybody seems to believe that love is a good thing. However, not all agree what is love. Is love that warm touchy-feely feeling a person has when he is with a familiar person? According to the Bible, love is caring in action. Love isn't what we *feel*, but what we *do*.

Our culture places a high value on feeling love… The Bible places a high value on love as an action.

* Eros – Love as a feeling
* Philia – Love as a relationship situation
* Agape - Unconditional

**Eros**

Eros is probably what most people mean when they announce with a smile, "I'm in love." This type of love covers everything from queasy stomachs and warm fuzzy feelings to strong sensual passion.

There are a couple of very interesting characteristics about eros. First, in order to exist eros *is dependent upon* the situation and circumstances. As long as a couple is enjoying a romantic situation, eros can thrive. But, as soon as hurtful words or actions appear, eros simply evaporates.

Second, eros is also held captive to each person's perception. For example, if someone perceives a particular quiet evening dinner with candles to be romantic, eros will thrive. However, passion becomes squashed for someone whenever he or she interprets the current situation to be undesirable. Eros thus grows strong and then wastes away based upon our perceptions.

Although eros at times might make us feel like we are on cloud nine, *it can not provide a reliable basis for building a deep and meaningful relationship* since it is so fickle and dependent upon perception and circumstances. Because of such things as accidents, diseases, and the fact that someone can choose to doubt or despise you regardless of your actions, it is clear that we can not determine how others will perceive us nor are we masters of our own circumstances. Although eros is exhilarating, this is not the Biblical word used for love.

**Philia**

We recognize philia and its meaning from the name Philadelphia, that is, the city of brotherly love. This is the love of friendship, best friends, and the fellowship of being with those people you enjoy.

Although philia is wonderful, it too is not reliable since it is also held captive by the sifting sands of situation as well as by ours and other's perceptions and expectations. Unfortunately, we probably all know of a friendship which waned or was severed because of time, distance, harsh words, how someone interpreted another's actions, etc. When the New Testament commends love, philia is the not the word which is used.

**The Beauty of Agape**\*

Unlike the previous two types of love, agape is not limited to being held hostage by its environment and someone's perception. The reason why agape can soar above these is because it is based upon the commitment of a decision. It entails the decision to proactively seek someone's well-being. Since it is not a knee jerk reaction nor just a responsive feeling to how I've been treated, agape is capable of acting in a hostile environment where there are no warm fuzzy feelings. For example, Jesus' teaching that we should agape our enemies is intended to show the boundless nature of the Christian commitment toward seeking another's well-being. Luke 6:35

The New Testament is full of examples and teachings illustrating the nature of agape as well as teaching designed to train the disciple's heart to be shaped by agape. A few examples illustrating the active nature of agape include:

• Knowing that sinful man would kill His Son, but also knowing that without Jesus we were doomed, God loved (agape) us by sending his Son. John 3:16

• Those who love (agape) Jesus will do what Jesus taught. John 14:15,23

• If a person has material resources and the love (agape) of God within him, his heart will take care of his brother who is in need. 1 John 3:17

• Just as Christ through love (agape) acted on behalf of the church, so too the Christian husband is to be motivated by love (agape) to act on behalf of his wife. Ephesians 5:25-29

If it were not enough that the proactive nature of agape has the power to rise above its environment, it can also empower passion and friendship! For example, when a spouse chooses to speak and act toward the mate with agape, this creates the loving environment in which eros and philia can thrive! Although the proactive spouse might even perceive the other spouse as being unkind or rude, additional problems can be prevented by responding out of agape while the power of agape works at nurturing the growth of the other forms of love!

Jesus taught his disciples that the world would know that they his people if they would show agape toward one another. John 13:35

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| **Philia** | **Agape** |
| **Natural** | **Learned** |
| **Emotional** | **Volitional** |
| **Discriminatory** | **Non-discriminatory** |
| **Conditional** | **Unconditional** |
| **Pleasure** | **Preciousness** |
| **Delight** | **Esteem** |
| **Liking** | **Prizing** |
| **Because of** | **In spite of** |
| **Fails** | **Never fails** |