

## 9: Agape Love (2 Peter 1:7)

Second Peter 1:7 says, "Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have **genuine love for everyone**" (emphasis mine).

More than likely you are involved in an active, genuine love relationship with another person—whether a spouse, child, parent, or friend. In this lesson we will examine our reluctance to show compassionate concern for those who do not return our love, for those with whom we are not intimate, and for those in the world without hope or a future. As we study Jonah, God's heart for all people is revealed... as well as our—and Jonah's—unwillingness to love like God.

Read Luke 6:27-36. Compare verse 32 to Matthew 5:46.

Answer Jesus' question. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Who is an enemy of God? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Read Romans 5:10. How did God demonstrate love to them?

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Who are your enemies? How can you demonstrate love towards them?

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The Greek word for "love" listed in 2 Peter 1:7 is *agape*. *Agape* indicates a loyal, selfless, self-giving, sacrificial, and charitable love. Charity means "benevolent goodwill (care, compassionate concern) toward or love of humanity; generosity and helpfulness especially toward the needy or suffering."<sup>1</sup> It was this love that compelled God to send His only Son to the cross. Read John 3:16-17.

### Unwilling

Read Jonah 1:1-3. The Assyrians, a cruel and godless people, were enemies of Israel. So when God commanded Jonah, an Israelite, to give the city opportunity to repent, he fled. How did Jonah's actions reveal the absence of agape in his heart? \_\_\_\_\_  
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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 9th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A. : Merriam-Webster, 1985, c1983

Is there a person or people group that you intentionally avoid because they have wronged you or because you feel they are not worthy to receive God's mercy? If so, who? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would loving them require of you? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Read John 15:12-17. In the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), we learned that we do not typically define friends, or *neighbors*, the way God defines them. Who must we be willing to lay down or put aside our lives for? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "*Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.*"

Read Jonah 3:10-4:11. What attitudes surface as Jonah converses with God? What are Jonah's intentions? \_\_\_\_\_  
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What did the plant reveal about Jonah's uncharitableness toward the needy and suffering? What was of more value to Jonah: his comfort or the souls of the Ninevites? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

### Sacrifice

Jonah clearly understood God's attributes, but he needed to learn a lesson regarding God's divine love. What is revealed about God's heart towards humanity? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Review the definition of charity and then read the following:

First Corinthians 13:4-13 says,

*"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and*

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*we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (KJV).*

Read 1 John 4:7-11. Write out verse 11 in the space provided.

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You were asked, twice, what was required of you in order to demonstrate agape love. Sacrifice is defined as "an act of offering [to God] something precious; destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else."<sup>2</sup>

Read Romans 5:5-8. What did God sacrifice in order to demonstrate His immeasurable love towards us? \_\_\_\_\_

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Agape is clearly the deepest possible expression of the love of God.

In closing, read 1 John 3:16-23.

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<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 9th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1985, c1983