LESSON 10

Its Crowning Virtue: Love

There are three Greek words translated "love." They are *eros*, which is not found in the New Testament, *philia*, found approximately twenty-five times in noun and verb forms, and *agape* and *agapao*, found approximately thirty times in the Synoptic Gospels and twenty-four times in the General Epistles, with ten of those in 1 Peter. In contrast, *agape* and *agapao* are found 112 times in the Pauline Epistles and 113 times in the Johannine writings. *Agape* is the distinctly New Testament word for love.

Love: Its Meaning

Eros is a seeking, searching love. To use a term of C. S. Lewis, it is a need-love. It is used to describe sexual love but not exclusively so. Barth suggests that "in its purest form it is an impulse from below upwards, from man to what is above him, to the divine." But "in any case . . . it is not a turning to the other for the other's sake, but the satisfying of the vital hunger of the one who loves, for whom the beloved, whether a thing, a man, or the divine, is only as it were consumer goods, the means to an end."[1] The distinctive element in *eros* is that it reaches out to find the fulfilment of some need. It is a grasping, possessive love. *Philia* refers primarily to a warm type of love such as a friend for a friend. It is a shared love.

Agape is unmotivated by anything outside of itself.[2] It is unconditional; it has no reservations. It is uncoerced. It gives itself voluntarily and unselfishly to the object loved. It is a gift-love. It speaks the language of self-denial and self-sacrifice: "God so loved the world that he *gave* his only Son . . ." (John 3:16); "Christ loved the church and *gave* himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25); "Greater love has no man than this, that a man *lay down* his life for his friends" (John 15:13). There is inherent in *agape* love, to use a Barthian expression, "radically unlimited liberality." Or, as Brunner says, "It is not a love that judges

Underline the word that is not in the New Testament.

Aqape	*Didachea*
Luo	*Eros*
Philia	*Ego*

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Are the following statements true or false?

1. Agape is the distinctly New Testament word for love. _____

2. Eros is a seeking, searching love. _____

3. Philia refers primarily to a warm type of love such as a friend for a friend. _____

(1.true; 2.true; 3.true)

Agape gives itself voluntarily and unselfishly to the _____.

(object loved)

[1] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. by Harold Knight, *et al.* (T. & T. Clark, 1960), III, 2, 279.

[2] The standard work, under considerable criticism in recent years, on *eros* and *agape* is Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. by Philip S. Watson (rev. ed.; S. P. C. K., 1963). Barth in a number of places compares *eros* and *agape*. For a helpful and rather lengthy discussion, see *Church Dogmatics*, IV, 2, 733–51. Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., *A Survey of Christian Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 138–43, has a helpful, compact analysis and appraisal of Nygren. For an examination of every use of *agape, agapon,* and *agapetos* in the New Testament, see the three volumes by Ceslaus Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, trans. by Marie Acquinas McNamara and Mary Honoria Richter (B. Herder Book Co., 1963-66).

worth, but a love which bestows worth.''[3] It will even suffer itself to become ''a lost love,'' a love that may not be returned but which may be rejected and trampled under foot. It does not depend on the response of the one who is loved. It does not refer primarily to the emotions; it operates basically in the area of the will. Some scholars believe that it would have been better to have brought the word into the English language rather than to have translated it.

The type of love expressed by the word *agape* finds full expression only in God. God is *agape*. It expresses the very essence of His being. His love is a gift-love in contrast to a need-love. The nature of this divine love (*agape*) is most fully revealed or manifested in the cross (see 1 John 4:9–10).

On the other hand, man's love at its best is a mixture of gift-love and need-love. Reinhold Niebuhr, in his typically paradoxical or dialectical way, says that *agape* is an ''impossible possibility'' for man. The awareness that we fall short creates within us a tension that moves us in the direction of *agape*. The latter is the norm for the Christian life. The remainder of this lesson will be a discussion of *agape*, the distinctly Christian concept of love.

Love and the Virtues

Looked at from within the individual, love is a virtue or a character trait. Looked at from outside the individual, love is a principle that provides guidance for the Christian in times of decision. Whether we consider love a virtue or a principle, it stands out as the greatest or crowning virtue or as the most important and most inclusive principle. Does this mean that love is inclusive of all the other virtues or stands alone as a guiding principle for the Christian? The answer is clearly, No. Love is the ground for the other virtues. It gives unity to them, but it does not absorb or eliminate them. It may be and is the mother of the virtues, but children exist as really as the mother. Love is the first but not the only fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). The fact that it is first suggests that it is the most important fruit of the Spirit and that it infuses and gives unity to the others. It should be remembered, however, that as important as love is, the other virtues or qualities are mentioned. Fletcher goes so far as to say that love ''is the one and only *regulative principle* of Christian ethics.''[4] It is the most important regulative principle but not the only one.

Love may be ''the final criterion of righteousness'' but it is not the only criterion. It may be the one commandment that is repeated ''with magnificent monotony'' but it is not the only commandment. Love ''binds everything together in perfect harmony'' (Col. 3:14) but in the bundle, it binds together compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness. It may be and is the more or most excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31) but it is not the only way. Love is

---

Agape operates basically in the area of the _____.

(will)

Is the following statement true or false?

The nature of agape is most fully revealed in the _____.

(cross)

The awareness that we fall short creates within us a _____ *that moves us in the direction of* _____.

(tension, agape)

Is the following statement true or false?

Love stands out as the greatest virtue or as the most important and most inclusive principle. _____

(true)

Love is the ground for the other _____.

(virtues)

Is the following statement true or false?

Love is the only important regulative principle. _____

(false)

---

[3] Emil Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order*, trans. by Mary Hottinger (Lutterworth Press, 1945), p. 114.

[4] Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, p. 61.

greater than faith and hope, but they, along with love, abide (1 Cor. 13:13).

The so-called theological virtues—faith, hope, love—are frequently grouped together in Paul's epistles. To the Colossians he wrote, "We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven" (Col. 1:4–5). He thanked the Lord for the "work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope" of the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:3). Faith enables us to overcome the world (1 John 5:4), love to minister to it, and hope to renounce it.

Faith and love are particularly closely related. "The love the Christian has is really not his but the love of God expressed through him. Our response to God's love for us is our faith in Him. Through this faith we have come into a vital relationship with the real source of the love that partakes of the divine quality (*agape*). In turn, through faith we become a channel for His love to others—faith works through love (Gal. 5:6), is 'active in love' (NEB), or 'expresses itself in love' (Phillips)."[5] Barth expresses the relation of faith and love as follows: "As we come to faith we begin to love. If we did not begin to love, we would not have come to faith."[6] Love is grounded in or is the product of faith. Faith finds its fulfilment or realization through love. Faith, strictly speaking, is not a virtue but the source or ground of virtues.

A wonderful ladder or stair-step of Christian virtues or character traits is found in 2 Peter 1:5–7. The opening words of the exhortation are: "For this very reason," which clearly refers to something previously said. The author had suggested that his readers had escaped from the corruption that was in the world and had " become partakers of the divine nature" (v. 4). Because this was true or "for this very reason" they should "make every effort to supplement" their "faith with virtue." Here is the therefore perspective so prevalent in the Scriptures. The beginning point is faith; the crowning virtue or quality is *agape*. The latter even stands above love of the brethren or "brotherly affection" (*philadelphia*). *Agape* may be cultivated within and evolve from the Christian fellowship, but it cannot be limited to that fellowship. Its very nature demands that it reach out to all men.

What about the relation of love to one particular virtue: justice? We can believe in the close relation of the two without equating them as Fletcher does: "Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed, nothing else."[7]

Tillich suggests that love is the basic or ultimate principle in justice, while justice is imminent in love. Love "shows justice what to do" while "justice is the form and structure of love. . . . Love makes justice just."[8] The creative element in justice is love. Reinhold Niebuhr suggests that "love is both the fulfillment and the negation of all achievements of justice in his-

Name two ways faith and love are related.

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Complete the following statements.

The creative element in _____ *is love.*

[5] Maston, *Biblical Ethics*, pp. 206–07.

[6] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 2, 371.

[7] Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, p. 87.

[8] Paul Tillich, *The New Being* (Scribner's, 1955), p. 33.

tory."[9] He contends that love cannot maintain itself in human society, but that justice is an attainable goal. This does not mean that love is not relevant. It stands in constant judgement against the very imperfect expressions of love in society. Love is normative for all of life, including justice. *Agape* love is always more than just. Justice is concerned with what is due, *agape* gives itself unselfishly and fully to the one who is loved. It goes beyond justice, operating in the area of grace. "Love can only do more, it can never do less, than justice requires."[10]

Love is basic and primary. Justice is a derivative of love, but it is also an indispensable instrument or expression of love. Love demands justice; it is also the ground for the judgement of justice. Divorce justice from love and it becomes a "soulless legalism." Divorce love from justice and it becomes less than *agape*; it will become a superficial sentimentality.

Justice is concerned with what is _____.

Agape gives itself unselfishly and fully to the one who is _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Love and the Law

The leaders of situation ethics can be commended for the prominence they give to love. We cannot agree, however, with some of the things they say concerning law and the relation of love to law. Fletcher, for example, claims that love is "the solitary law" which should be "understood as the successor to the commandments and not a compressor." Referring to the last six of the Ten Commandments, he goes so far as to say, "Situation ethics has good reason to hold it as a *duty* in some situations to break them, *any or all of them*."[11]

Those who would, in the name of love, eliminate law should be reminded that love itself is a law or a command. According to James, it is "the royal law" (James 2:8). Jesus called it "a new commandment" (John 13:34). He also plainly said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15; cf. 15:10), and there is more than one commandment.

Love itself is a _____ *or a* _____.

(law, command)

Love to God and neighbour is an act of obedience although it is an obedience that is motivated by love. Love is commanded, yet it is free. Love is the one supreme commandment but not "the solitary" commandment or law. The other commandments, including the Decalogue, will help one to know what the love of God demands in a particular situation.

Love is the one supreme commandment but not " _____ *" commandment or law.*

(the solitary)

When Jesus was asked which was "the great commandment in the law," he quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 and then said, "This is the great and first commandment." Notice that love is the "great and *first* commandment," which clearly suggests that it is not the only commandment. He then quoted Leviticus 19:8: "Love your neighbour as yourself" (see Matt. 22:36–39). There follows the statement: "The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments" (v. 40, TEV).

Is the following statement true or false?

When Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 as "the great and first commandment," He clearly suggested that it is the only commandment. _____

(false)

What is meant when it says that the Law and the Prophets "depend on" or are hung on these two commandments? We

[9] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (Scribner's, 1943), II, 246.

[10] Emil Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order*, p. 117.

[11] Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, p. 74.

may not know the depth of the meaning but evidently it means that all the commandments in the Old Testament Scriptures would be fulfilled if one loved God supremely and his neighbour as himself. For example, if one loved God supremely, he would keep the first table of the Law; if he loved his neighbour as himself he would keep the second table of the Law. And the Ten Commandments summarize the requirements of the basic moral law of the Old Testament. It is Paul who says, "The whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' " (Gal. 5:14). To reverse Fletcher's statement, the two commandments of love for God and neighbour compress, but they do not succeed or replace the Law of Moses or the teachings of the prophets. Kierkegaard suggests that "there is not one provision of the law, not a single one, which love wishes to abolish."[12] Or, as John A. T. Robinson, who is more balanced than Fletcher concerning the relation of love and law, says, "Love builds on law, it comes to fulfil it, not to destroy it; the second mile of love presupposes the first mile of the law." [13]

How does love fulfil the law? It fulfils it not by abrogating it but by going beyond it. Jesus said, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Matt. 5:17). He fulfilled them or gave them "real meaning" (TEV) by going beyond the surface or formal requirements of the law. We see this pointedly brought out in his comparisons in the Sermon on the Mount.

They heard it said:	*Jesus said:*
No murder	No anger
No adultery	No adulterous thoughts
Divorce for some	No divorce
No false oaths	No oaths
An eye for an eye	No retaliation
Love neighbour	Love enemy

Kierkegaard compares the relation of law and love to a sketch and the finished work of art by the same artist. Law and love are from the same source; they are products of the same Artist, and are not at variance any more than the sketch and the finished work of art. He also suggests that there is no more conflict between law and love than between hunger and that which satisfies the hunger.[14]

Some contend that love frees the Christian from the law; that we are under grace and not under law. Theoretically this is correct, but the only people who can be free from the law are those who live beyond the reach of law. Freedom from the law and from any other external authority is realized only when the law is internalized. Such freedom comes as the love of God enters into and controls our lives. Freedom may be the birthright

The Ten Commandments summarize the requirements of the basic moral _____ of the _____ _____.

(law, Old Testament) _____

Love fulfils the law by _____ it.

(going beyond) _____

_____

Law and love are from the same _____.

(source) _____

[12] Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. by David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 87. Douglas Steere, in his introduction, says that this book is Kierkegaard's "greatest single work on Christian ethics."

[13] John A. T. Robinson, *Christian Morals Today*, p. 21.

[14] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, pp. 85–87.

of the Christian, but it is a birthright that must be achieved. The freedom that the Christian has in the love of God is not a freedom from obligation and responsibility. Rather, it is freedom for obligation and service. The well-known word of Luther was:

> A Christian man is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.
> A Christian man is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

One of the weaknesses of the so-called new morality or situation ethics is that it assumes a maturity that is unrealistic. Certainly laws and principles play an important part in the moral training of children. And to a distressing degree all of us are children in our understanding of our moral and spiritual responsibilities. We need all the assistance that is available in any time of decision. We may want to do the "loving thing" in a particular situation, but how can we know what love would dictate? As Paul Tillich says, "Every individual, even the most creative, needs given structures that embody the experience and wisdom of the past, that liberate him from the necessity of having to make innumerable decisions on his own, and that show him a meaningful way to act in most situations."[15]

Love: Its Source

What is the source of Christian love, the kind of love that can only be described by the frequently used New Testament word *agape*? The source of such love is not men but God, who is *agape*. Paul wrote to the Romans as follows: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5; cf. Col. 1:8). Again he plainly says that the fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22); love "is the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit" (Barth). It is the greatest gift of the Spirit because it is the sharing of the very nature of God. If the Spirit dwells within us there inevitably will be some fruit of the Spirit, including love. We must admit, however, that the fruit may be only thirty or sixty-fold, but there will be and must be some fruit.

One reason we say this is because of the nature of the Christian experience. When we became children of God, we were brought into union with the resurrected Christ. Christ Himself said that He and the Father were one. The One with whom we were brought into union through our faith in Christ is love or *agape* (1 John 4:8, 16). Just as surely as the resurrected Christ lives within us, love or *agape* dwells within us. It is this love that constrains or controls us (2 Cor. 5:14). This love "has its origin not in us but in God" (Bonhoeffer). Or, as Kagawa once said, "Our love is the mainspring that God has wound up." This love which is God's creation not only finds lodgement within us but it seeks to reach out through us and touch and bless the lives of others. "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19); divine love precedes human love. The latter is always the product of and a response to the former.

The fact that our love, as Christians, is expressive of our

The freedom that a Christian has is a freedom for _____ *and* _____.

(obligation, service)

We need all the assistance that is _____ *in any time of* _____.

(available, decision)

The source of Christian love is _____, *who is* _____.

(God, agape)

Love seeks to reach out through us and bless the _____ *of* _____.

(lives, others)

[15] Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond* (Harper & Row, 1963), P. 93.

gratitude to God for His love to us means that the motive for what we do for our fellowmen flows from within. As Kierkegaard says, "As the peaceful lake is grounded deep in the hidden spring which no eye can see, so a man's love is grounded even deeper in the love of God." Similarly, Luther says that Christian love is "a flowing love, which flows from the inside of the heart like a fresh stream that goes on flowing and cannot be stopped or dried up." That flowing stream of love expresses itself in every relation of life: in the home and church, on the campuses and the athletic field, on the streets and in the community, everywhere. In so far as love does not find a normal and natural expression in and through our lives, to that degree we have not let the love of God possess us.

The clearer our awareness of the grace of God expressed through His love for us, the deeper will be our desire to express His love in relation to those about us. In other words, the deeper our sense of forgiveness, the greater will be our love not only for Him but also for those He loves. From the background of the woman of the street who had bathed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with her hair, in marked contrast to the neglect of Simon, Jesus said, "He who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47). So it is with us. If we are conscious of having been forgiven much by the Lord, we will not only love Him in return but we will also let His love flow through us to bless the lives of others.

And let us suggest again that the more mature we become in Him the less we will be conscious of any motive that impels us. What we do for Him and for our fellowman will increasingly flow naturally from a deepening and an increasingly vital union with the risen and indwelling Christ. But we must confess that we are all very immature. For this reason, we must continue to make conscious efforts to be and to do what we should. Love (*agape*) has not yet fully possessed our lives. This is one reason why there is still an important place in the Christian life for the imperative as well as the indicative, for the "thou shall nots" as well as the "thou shalls."

Love: Its Dimensions

Paul wrote to the Ephesians as follows: "I pray that you... may have the power to understand how broad and long and high and deep is Christ's love. Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known" (Eph. 3:17–19, TEV). This sets forth the dimensions of the love of Christ which can never be fully known or expressed in our lives.

Jesus summed up the dimensions of our love in terms of love for God and love for neighbour. These represent the vertical and horizontal phases of life. Concerning the horizontal dimension of love, Barth says, "It will not take place without love of God. And there would be no love to God if it did not take place. But while it can only follow, and must follow, this prior love, it is an autonomous loving, for God in heaven and the neighbour on earth are two and not one." He further says, "Love to others cannot exhaust itself in love to God, nor can love to God exhaust

The motive for what we do for our fellowman flows from _____.

(within)

The deeper our sense of forgiveness, the greater will be our love not only for Him but also for those _____.

(He loves)

Is the following statement true or false?

What we do for Christ and for our fellowman will increasingly flow naturally from a deepening and an increasingly vital union with the risen and indwelling Christ.

_____

(true)

Jesus summed up the dimensions of our love in terms of love for _____ *and love for our* _____.

itself in love to others. The one cannot be replaced and made unnecessary by the other.''[16]

We have a unique responsibility to love those within the Christian community or fellowship. The members of a family should love all people but have a unique love for those within the family circle; so it is or should be in the Christian family. The ''new commandment'' that Jesus gave his disciples was that they love one another as He had loved them. Most of what Paul and John had to say concerning love was love expressed within the Christian fellowship. This was inevitable since they wrote primarily to Christians and Paul in particular wrote to Christian churches or groups. Paul prayed that the Thessalonians might increase ''in love to one another and to all men'' (1 Thess. 3:12). The love of the Christian is to move in a constantly expanding circle: the Christian brotherhood, the neighbour, the enemy.

If we love God we will love our neighbour, and there are no limits to love of neighbour. If we cannot love our neighbour as he is, then we are loving an idea or ideal, and in the final analysis this means that we are loving ourselves. Luther suggests that Christian love says, ''I love you, not because you are good or bad; for I draw my love, not from your goodness, as from another's fountain, but from my own little spring, from the Word, which is grafted in my heart and which bids me love my neighbour.'' He further says that this love ''flows out abundantly and is there for all who need it, touching both the good and the bad, friend and foe.''[17]

Let us suggest again that our union with the resurrected Christ is the spring or fountain within that flows out to all kinds of people. Jesus, when He walked among men, was the friend of publicans and sinners. He reached out in love to all types of people: men and women, the blind, the sick, the crippled, the demented, as well as the well and healthy. His eyes were always turned to and His heart reached out to people in need. The same thing will be true of us to the degree that we have been captured by His spirit.

One of the most difficult things for most Christians is to love their enemies and yet Jesus plainly said to His disciples, ''Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'' (Matt. 5:44). By this they would show their kinship to their Father who ''makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust'' (v. 45). ''God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us'' (Rom. 5:8).

Only Christian love or *agape* can reach out and encircle the enemy. There is no limit for *agape* in depth or range. It is a lost love, and its lostness is not seen anywhere more clearly than in the Cross. It is such a lost love, spontaneous and unmotivated by anything outside of itself, that can love all men, including one's enemies. *Agape* seeks to unite the separated, regardless of the basis of the separation: colour, culture, moral standards, etc. We should, however, add that this *agape* type of love never finds complete expression in our lives.

(God, neighbour)

We have a unique responsibility to love those within the Christian _____ *or* _____.

(community, fellowship)

Is the following statement true or false?

If we cannot love our neighbour as he is, then we are loving an idea or ideal, and in the final analysis this means that we are loving ourselves. _____

(true)

Is the following statement true or false?

It is easy for most Christians to love their enemies. _____

(false)

Agape is a _____ *love.*

(lost)

[16] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV, 1, 106.

[17] Martin Luther, ''On the Sum of the Christian Life,'' in *Luther's Works*, ed. and trans. by John W. Doberstein (Muhlenberg Press, 1959), LI, 269.

There is at least one additional dimension of love that has not been mentioned: self-love. The second commandment, like unto the first, was: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Are we commanded to love ourselves? Is there a place for self-love in the Christian's life? In seeking an answer it is wise to remember that Jesus was quoting from the Old Testament. Also, no writer of the New Testament interpreted Jesus as commanding the love of self. It seems that self-love was assumed and was used for comparative purposes. As Calvin says, "Men are naturally prone to excessive self-love . . . there was no need of a law to inflame a love already existing in excess . . . . The Lord has made self-love as it were the standard."[18] We are to love our neighbour as we actually love ourselves. It does not say "more than we love ourselves." Also, this comparison is not attached to the love for God. We should love God better than we love ourselves. If we love God supremely, we will have a respect for self that will be deepened by our awareness of our relation to Him. This awareness of His presence will not only deepen our respect for ourselves but it will also deepen the respect for our neighbour. Our neighbour stands in the presence of God with us. We are equal in His sight. We are to love him as we love ourselves. Such a conception of self-love would make it compatible with self-denial and self-sacrifice which is so prominent in the teachings of the New Testament.

It seems that in the New Testament self-love was assumed and was used for _____ purposes.

(comparative)

We should love God better than we _____.

(love ourselves)

Conclusions Concerning Love

The crowning virtue and the guiding principle in every area of human relations should be love, a love that partakes of the divine quality. It should be a love for one another, for our neighbour, even our neighbour who may be our enemy. This love stems from God's love for us and for our neighbour. It should be a love that reaches up to the level of *agape* and finds its highest expression in the Cross. That kind of love expresses itself through redemptive self-sacrifice. It is this *agape*, self-giving type or quality of love that is described as follows in 1 Corinthians 13·

> Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
> Love never ends; . . . (1 Cor. 13:4–8a).

The crowning virtue and the guiding principle in every area of human relations should be love, a love that partakes of the _____.

(divine quality)

We do not possess these qualities fully but are we, in association with the resurrected Christ, making progress? Are they finding expression in our lives more fully from day to day? If they are, then our relations with others in the church, in the home, in the community, and in the world will be constantly improving.

[18] Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 358.

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What is *agape*?

2. What is the distinctive element in *eros*?

3. Describe *philia*?

4. Describe *agape*. Give two Scripture references that illustrate *agape*.

5. What creates the tension within us that moves us in the direction of *agape*?

6. What does *agape* demand of us by its very nature?

7. What is the difference between justice and *agape*?

8. What did Jesus say is the "great commandment"?

   How is this commandment related to the Law?

9. How does love fulfil the Law? Give one Bible reference to support your answer.

10. What is the source of love? Give one Bible reference to support your answer.

11. What unique responsibility do we have towards the Christian community?

12. What is one of the most difficult things for most Christians to do in keeping the law of love?

13. How is "self-love" treated in New Testament writings?

14. What prominent teaching in the New Testament makes "love our neighbour as we love ourselves" a compatible concept?

15. Explain Christian freedom. _____

16. Why does the author say that love is the greatest gift of the Spirit? _____

17. What responsibility to others comes to us when we receive *agape* love? _____

18. What has happened when love does not find a normal and natural expression in our lives? _____

19. How does a deeper sense of forgiveness affect us? _____

20. What should be the crowning virtue and guiding principle in every area of human relations? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). The following activities are based on the study guide text.

1. Using the author and any other resource you wish, write in your own words the meaning of (1) *eros*, (2) *philia*, and (3) *agape*.
2. Why does the author suggest that love is listed first in Galatians 5:22-23?
3. By its very nature, what demand does *agape* make?
4. What helps one to know what the love of God demands in a particular situation?
5. In what way does the author compare the Christian's and children's need of laws and principles?
6. Explain the author's statement that if the Spirit dwells within us there inevitably will be some of the fruit of the Spirit.
7. What happens in the life of the one who is conscious that he has been forgiven much by the Lord?
8. Where is the "lostness" of *agape* most clearly seen? How does this event inspire greater service on our part?

Advanced activity (Level 3). The following activities are based on the study guide text.

1. Explain the author's use of "a lost love."
2. How would you explain this statement: "Love is the ground for the other virtues"?
3. What answer could you give to those who would, in the name of love, say that the Law should be eliminated.
4. Write a paper of at least one page on this subject: "The Love That Constrains Us."
5. Prepare a sermon outline or Bible lesson outline on this subject: "The Cross: Symbol of God's Love." Be prepared to share this project with your seminar group.

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss why it may have been better to have brought *agape* into the English language instead of translating it.
2. Discuss the author's explanation of Matthew 22:36-40.
3. Does it seem that some non-Christians manifest the *agape* type of love more than many Christians? How can it be explained?
4. Is there not a real danger that so-called Christian love will become a mere sentimentality and a substitute for justice? How could this question be answered? Will the *agape* type of love ever do less than justice? Is there, however, a real danger that some will substitute what they call love for justice? Is this true not only in human relations including race relations but also in other relations?
5. What do you think of an unmarried couple who justify their participation in sex relations by saying, "We love one another"? Does love that partakes of the *agape* quality lead to pre-marital sex relations or would it postpone such relations until after marriage? How would you defend this position?

(Note to the Leader: If you have Level 3 students, ask them to share their projects with the entire group.)