

INTRODUCTION

So many people today are saying, "I love you," and it doesn't mean much. You heard about the Eskimo that drove to see his sweetheart and he said, "Honey, I have driven 20 miles across the tundra driving a sled of dogs to tell you I love you. She said, "That's a bunch of mush!" But we use the word "love" in so many different ways. Sometimes words can mean different things and people get words mixed up and they don't really mean it when they say, "I love you."

You have to really blame Ken Brumley for this groaner. He told me the story about a group of Catholic friars who moved over here from Africa and set up a florist shop in a small town. The only problem was the people in that little town would go in and mysteriously disappear. What actually happened was these friars were crooked and had some vicious man-eating vines in there from Africa. People were coming in there and these vines were eating them up! People began to complain to Hugh, the local sheriff. Hugh began to stake the joint out. Pretty soon he discovered these friars had man-eating vines. So he rushed in and destroyed the vines and arrested all of those friars! The moral of the story is Only Hugh can prevent florist friars.

Sometimes words we use don't have all the meanings we intend. In the Greek language the word "love" was translated with several different words in Greek. There was the word *storge*, which meant "a patriotic kind of love." That would be the kind of love we would use when flippantly like saying, "I love ice cream!" There was another word for love that had to do with romantic love. It was the word *eras*. Then of course there was a word that meant "a brotherly kind of love," *phileo*. But the word used 1 Corinthians 13, is that beautiful word *agape*, which means "unselfish love."

The apostle Paul extracts this wonderful topic of love and like a beautiful diamond he looks at it and sees thirteen beautiful characteristics, facets of this diamond of love and he explains them, using thirteen different verbs.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7. "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 in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

The opposite of love or *agape* is not hate. It is what we might call "self-love," a selfishness. Doesn't Jesus say, "Love your neighbor as yourself?" You're supposed to love yourself and see yourself as God sees you, but you are not supposed to be *in love* with yourself. You're not supposed to be so enamored about yourself that you neglect other people. Some people are so in love with themselves that they stand in front of a mirror and sing, "How Great Thou Art" every morning! The opposite of *agape* is that kind of self-centered kind of attention. In this passage of scripture I would like to contrast for you the difference between this self-love and *agape*. I would like for all of you to examine your relationships with other people, with your family members, with the people you work with and with your neighbors and friends. Ask yourself how you measure up to what real love is.

1. SELF-LOVE IS IMPATIENT

First of all, self-love is impatient—it has a short fuse. Self-love doesn't have the ability to wait on somebody else and can't stand to be inconvenienced. On the other hand *agape* is patient. Paul says, "Love is patient." That word is a verb. It is a verb that is not a feeling—it is an action. In other words I'm not asking you, "Do you feel patient?" because some people just say, "I don't feel very patient." The word here doesn't mean "feel patient," it means "to act patiently." It is a word literally meaning to be inconvenienced, yet to endure it, to not want to strike back when you are inconvenienced. The word was translated by Chrysostum, one of the early church fathers. He translated the word to mean "a man who is wronged and has it in his power to avenge himself but will never do it." If you still haven't grasped what this word really means, in our culture there is a concept we often call "the killer instinct" or "going for the jugular." We use it in business and in relationships. This word, *patient*, is just the opposite of that. In the Greek culture—and I believe it's true at least in the American business culture and in the American sports culture—vengeance is a virtue! This word means just the opposite. It means you don't go in for the kill. It means you restrain yourself and hold back and show meekness. It is a characteristic of God. God is love and God is patient! 2 Peter 3:9, says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." Aren't you glad God is patient toward you and me? Aren't you glad God doesn't give up on us? He hangs in there and he is long-suffering toward us.

Years ago, before people had motion pictures and television, it was popular to go out and hear all of these speakers. There were a lot of famous speakers in America at that time. There was one named Robert Ingersoll, who was probably the most popular infidel of 1920s America. He went around promoting atheism and preaching his gospel of unbelief. He was famous for standing up in a crowded auditorium and daring God to strike him down. This was his famous statement. Robert Ingersoll would point his finger toward the sky and say, "If there is a God, I curse his name and I give that God, if he really exists, five minutes to strike me down dead!" When he would say that, the audience would gasp. Blasphemy! Surely God would strike this man down for such blasphemy like that. They would wait and watch and count the minutes until five minutes passed. That's how he introduced his speech, saying there really was no God. He was famous for that five minute dare-for-God. I love the response Dr. A. J. Gordon, a famous pastor in Boston, gave to that. When somebody asked him, "What do you think about Robert Ingersoll daring God to strike him dead in five minutes," Dr. Gordon would say, "Does Ingersoll dare to think that he can exhaust God's patience in only five minutes?" God is patient. He is not to be tempted. Don't you *dare* dare him! But God is patient. He is long-suffering. The Bible says that's why we ought to be patient and long-suffering toward those around us.

How do you measure up? Do you demonstrate patience toward your family members, your friends or do you hate to be inconvenienced and strike out when you are inconvenienced? Self-love is impatient. "Don't you make me wait!" I think Abraham Lincoln was one of the greatest leaders America ever had and I admire him greatly. Did you know he was criticized all during his time in public office? One of his greatest critics was a man named Edwin Stanton, from Illinois. He ran against Abraham Lincoln in several elections. He publicly called Abraham Lincoln a "silly-looking clown" and "the original gorilla" and he was famous for saying, "You don't have to go to Africa to see a gorilla, you only have to go to Springfield, Illinois, to see a

gorilla, Abraham Lincoln.” But Abraham Lincoln never struck back. He never said anything unkind or evil about Edwin Stanton. Later, when Lincoln was elected President, he was looking for a man to serve as Secretary of War as they called it then, and do you know whom he chose? Edwin Stanton. People asked, “Why did you choose him after he said all these critical things about you?” Lincoln said, “I chose him, because I believe he is the best man for the job.” Abraham Lincoln was exhibiting exactly what this word means. He didn’t try to strike out in vengeance. He was long-suffering. Later, when Lincoln was assassinated and Edwin Stanton filed by to look at his body, he said, “There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen, because of his patience toward other people.”

2. SELF-LOVE IS MEAN

Number two. It says in verse 4, “Love is kind.” What’s the characteristic of self-love? It is mean. Some people have very little love in their hearts. I heard about a man who went to the doctor and the doctor said, “Sir, I’m sorry to tell you but you have rabies!” The man took out a piece of paper and started writing things down. The doctor said, “What are you doing?” He said, “I’m writing down a list of my enemies. I’m going to bite them!” The Bible says, “*Agape* is not mean.” On the other hand *agape* is kind. It’s kind. What is kindness? Someone once said kindness is simply love with its work clothes on. It’s love when it goes to work. Here again the word does not mean to feel kindly or to feel kindness; it means to do acts of kindness to people. If you love them, you will demonstrate it tangibly by showing them kindness.

Have you ever noticed there seems to be some kind of movement called “random acts of kindness” in America? I think that’s great! Once a year they have a “Random Acts of Kindness Week.” And I think it’s wonderful. I think for a Christian it ought not to be random acts of kindness. It ought to be continual acts of kindness. I’m blessed when people show kindness toward me and I must admit, it causes me to want to show kindness toward other people. It’s not all that unusual for me to be sitting in a restaurant with my family and we’ll see somebody from the church and we’ll wave at them and they will come by and speak to us or something like that. Then, when we go to the cashier, they’ll say “These people have already paid for your meal.” That was such an act of unsolicited kindness. If I see somebody and I can do that, because somebody has done it to me, I want to do it for other people.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could just have a chain reaction of continual acts of kindness toward people? The Bible says, “Love is kind.” Ephesians 4:32, says, “Be kind one to another tender-hearted forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.” How about in your family? Are you showing kindness towards your family members? Because I want to tell you how you are at home is how you really are. If you are not kind to those people in your family, any kindness you show to those outside your family is basically hypocritical. Husbands, how about it? Are you showing kindness toward that lady you are married to? Guys, don’t you remember when you were courting her? When you were young and going out on dates, do you remember how kind you treated her? You’re sitting there drinking a soda at the soda fountain and your feet are up under the table and you accidentally touch her foot with your foot and you say, “Oh, sweetheart. I’m so sorry. Did I injure your dainty, little toe there? Forgive me!” Nowadays when you are sitting at the table and you kick her under the table “Get your number nines out of the way there!” If you don’t show kindness towards your family members, it’s a

hypocritical act to show it toward other people. Kindness starts at home. Husbands and wives don't you dare say "I love you" to that mate if you are not willing to show kindness to them. You see self-love is mean, but *agape* is kind.

3. SELF-LOVE IS ENVIOUS OF SUCCESS

Look at the third characteristic. Verse 4 says, "Love is kind. It does not envy." That means self-love is envious of success, the success of other people. In contrast, *agape* is glad for success in the life of another person. It was Shakespeare who first called envy or jealousy, "the green sickness." Even today we use that phrase. We talk about somebody being "green with envy" for somebody else. Envy can take on several forms. You can look at another person and you can be envious of what they have or of what they are. That's one form of jealousy. There is a much more insidious kind of envy when you can look at somebody else and you can wish they didn't have what they have or weren't who they are. That's the most dangerous kind of envy or jealousy.

In the Old Testament it says, "God is a jealous God." Please understand the difference. You should be jealous for those you love but you cannot be jealous *of* those you love! When somebody says to me, "David, I heard Cindy speak at a banquet or speak to a women's retreat and she is a wonderful speaker!" You see if I am jealous of her I am thinking, "Hmmm...I don't like people saying that about her. They may think she is a better speaker than I am!" That means to be jealous *of* her and I can't be that way. I'm not that way! But if somebody says something ugly or hurtful or hateful about any of my family members, I'll tell you I get riled up in a hurry because I'm jealous *for* them. Understand the difference in being jealous *of* and being jealous *for*?

There are many examples in the Bible of the dangers of envy or jealousy. What about Cain? Cain made a sacrifice before the Lord and so did Abel. God accepted Abel's sacrifice and Cain was so eaten up with jealousy, he killed his brother. What about Joseph? Joseph's father so loved him that he gave Joseph that coat of many colors. And Joseph talked about his dream of how he was elevated in prominence over all of his brothers and it made them jealous. So Joseph's brothers tied him up and threw him in a pit and sold him to a slaver and he ended up in Egypt, all because of envy, jealousy! In 1 Kings 3, we read the story about two women. Both were mothers of infants and they come before King Solomon holding on to one live infant. One of them said, "Last night while we were sleeping somebody rolled over in the bed and smothered the baby. Now here's the living baby." One mother said, "It's my baby!" The other mother said, "It's my baby!" and they argued over the child. What was the reason? The mother of the dead child wanted that baby. She was jealous of the other mother! Solomon said, "I'll give you a simple answer. Cut the baby into two parts. You take one half and you take the other half!" The real mother said, "No, she can have the baby!" The mother of the dead child who was trying to lie her way into that situation said, "That's fine. Do it!" And immediately Solomon knew who the real mother was, all because of jealousy or envy.

I want to ask you tonight as we are talking about this. Is there anyone you know who, if they succeed or receives some kind of an honor or recognition, that it bugs you a little bit? "Well, I could do a better job than they could!" Do you know where jealousy is rampant? I don't mind

telling you, pastors are some of the most jealous people on earth. There might be some preacher out there listening to me tonight saying, “Well, I could do a better job than that guy’s doing right now!” Pastors sometimes look at other guys’ churches and they say, “Well, I ought to have a church that big!” It runs rampant everywhere! But love does not allow jealousy. You can’t be jealous and claim to love your brother.

The apostle Paul gave us the example on how we ought to treat other people when they are doing something we wish we could be doing. In Philippians 1, Paul was in jail and wanted to be out preaching, but was behind bars and there were all these people who were preaching. He said some of them were preaching for selfish gain. There would have been a lot of jealous preachers who said, “Those guys need to stop what they are doing. They are preaching for the wrong motive,” but not the apostle Paul. He didn’t have any jealousy. He said, “Whether they are preaching for selfish motives or whether they are preaching for the right motives, I just thank God that they are preaching!” He said, “Go to it, fellows! Keep preaching!” Love cannot be jealous and it cannot be envious.

4. SELF-LOVE BRAGS

Let’s look at the fourth characteristic here. Verse 4. “Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast.” Self-love brags! “I am somebody big!” The word there for “it doesn’t boast,” is a word literally meaning “to talk big!” The flip side of jealousy is bragging or boasting. “I think I’m as good as you are. In fact I think I’m even *better* than you are.” That’s what boasting is but love can’t be that way! Because self-love is always promoting self and pushing self to the forefront self-love always brags, “Look what I have done! Look who I am!” On the other hand *agape* is humble. It doesn’t brag. It doesn’t boast. Have you ever noticed some people only like to talk about themselves? Their conversation is littered with “I,” “me,” “my,” “myself,” “mine.” Somebody told me one time that there is a bird down in South America called the Mimi bird. It only has one song. “Me-me,” “Me-me,” “Me-me,” “Me-me.” I have never seen any with feathers, but I have seen plenty of them around here in Texas, haven’t you? “Me-me,” “Me-me.” Of course I know this never happens among any of our folks here in this church but there have been times when I have heard people get up and sing and they’ll reach for a high note and they’ll hit that high note and it’s pretty obvious the reason they are hitting that high note is that they are saying, “Look at how high I can sing!” That’s why they are doing it and it’s just kind of obvious. They will even pick those songs just so they can just go out of sight. On the other hand I have seen some people who can just sing the stars down, but they didn’t show off with their voice. They sang from the heart.

One of my favorite contemporary singers is Steve Green. Steve Green has one of the most beautiful voices you could ever even hear. He can sing a high C that would probably shatter every set of eyeglasses in this room. But most of the time when he sings, he sings a strong message. He’s not trying to show off his voice—he is trying to present a message. That’s the difference between boasting and humility. That’s what John the Baptist said in John 3:30 about Jesus. Picture this: Here’s John the Baptist, number one itinerant preacher in Israel, preaching out in the desert. Everybody is coming to hear him. Pharisees are coming. He is baptizing people. Everybody is saying, “John. John. He’s the Messiah! He’s the next guy! Let’s all follow John!” but he kept saying, “No, no, no, no, I’m not the Messiah.” He said, “One is coming after

me and I am not even worthy to tie his sandals. I'm just baptizing you with water, but he's going to come and baptize you in the Holy Spirit. Mine is just a physical, symbolic baptism but when he comes, it's a true immersion into the life of God. Then, later they even nagged John. In John 3, they said, "John some of your disciples are leaving! They are following Jesus! What do you think about that, John?" And in John 3:30, he said in love, "He must increase and I must decrease!" Love says, "You must increase and I must decrease." Self-love says, "I must increase. I don't care about who decreases as long as I increase." That's the difference!

CONCLUSION

George Whitfield was one of the great preachers from England who came over here and preached in one of the first great awakenings in America. He was a contemporary with John Wesley. Of course you have heard of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church. But though Whitfield and Wesley were probably the two most famous preachers in the world at that time, they disagreed over a very important point of doctrine. Whitfield was a strong Calvinist. In other words he believed God pre-determined who would be saved and who would be lost. John Wesley, on the other hand, was what's called an Arminianist. He believed in what we call "free choice" or "free will," what most of us believe. They often debated this and were known to be in great disagreement over this theological point. One time George Whitfield was interviewed by a newspaper in London. They were trying to egg him on and get him to say something unkind and hateful toward John Wesley. They asked Whitfield, "Mr. Whitfield, do you think that you will even see John Wesley in heaven? George Whitfield said, "No. I will not see John Wesley in heaven." The reporter was writing this down thinking, "I have a hot story here—controversy and scandal here! I can just see it now! 'Whitfield says, 'Wesley not in heaven.'" Then George Whitfield finished his statement. "No. I don't think I will see John Wesley in heaven, because John Wesley will be so close to the throne of God and I will be so far away that I won't even get to see him." What a statement of humility! You see real love does not brag. Real love is humble.

OUTLINE

SELF-LOVE IS...

1. IMPATIENT
2. MEAN
3. ENVOIOUS OF SUCCESS
4. BRAGS



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes