

Message #58

I Corinthians 13:4-7

About the year A.D. 56, Paul put together a list of qualities that he expected believers in God's church to have. He wanted them to continually demonstrate an agape level of love.

BELIEVERS IN GOD'S CHURCH ARE TO CONTINUALLY DEMONSTRATE GOD'S SUPERIOR LEVEL OF AGAPE LOVE BY ACTIVELY DEMONSTRATING BOTH THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE QUALITIES OF GOD'S AGAPE LOVE.

God expects His people to look and love like His people. God expects His people to demonstrate both the positive and negative qualities of His agape love.

You will recall that last time we made note of the fact that all the verbs of **verses 4-7** are indicative, meaning that this love is more factual than emotional. The qualities of agape love are factually described and it is our responsibility to understand them and apply them. The present tense of the verbs indicates that agape love is to be continual and habitual.

POSITIVE QUALITY #1 – Agape love IS patient. **13:4a**

Agape love is continually very patient with people.

POSITIVE QUALITY #2 – Agape love IS kind. **13:4b**

Agape love is continually gracious and sweet to all.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #3 – Agape love IS NOT jealous. **13:4c**

Agape love is not continually jealous of what others have and it is not continually envious, desiring to rob them of what they have.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #4 – Agape love DOES NOT brag. **13:4d**

Agape love does not continually boast.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #5 – Agape love IS NOT arrogant. **13:4e**

Agape love is not continually inflated.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #6 – Agape love DOES NOT act unbecomingly. **13:5a**

What this means is that agape love does not continually act disrespectfully, dishonorably or shamefully. It is respectful of others, honorable toward others and decent with others.

Agape love is a love that respects others, esteems others and does not shame them or demean them. People who are disrespectful toward others do not love at the agape level. People who dishonor and shame other people do not love at the agape level. People who do act unbecomingly toward others may, in fact, accomplish much, be involved in much and be very active; but in the sight of God, they are nothing more than a noisy gong or clanging cymbal.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #7 – Agape love DOES NOT seek its own. **13:5b**

The Greek text may literally be translated this way: “Agape love does not continually seek the things of self.” Agape love does not continually look out for self. Agape love is not continually looking for self-advantage or gain. It does not continually seek to pleasure self, to profit self or to honor self. Agape love is a love that continually becomes less interested in self and more interested in others.

People are, in themselves, self-oriented; people who love like God does are others-oriented.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #8 – Agape love IS NOT provoked. **13:5c**

Agape love will not allow itself to be continually stimulated to anger. It will not, as Dr. Plummer said, continually “fly into a rage.” It is not quick-tempered.

For God, one of the tests of His love is the test of temper. If a person continually flies into a rage, he does not love in God’s level and he is nothing.

If a believer does not learn to control the temper, then no matter what he is doing, it profits him nothing and he is nothing more than a noisy gong because he is not demonstrating agape love.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #9 – Agape love DOES NOT take into account a wrong suffered.
13:5d

Agape love does not continually calculate the bad or evil of a person. It does not habitually reflect on another’s failures and does not habitually hold grudges. Agape love does deal in truth, but it does not continually recall evil.

The words “take into account” is the same Greek word used in Romans 4:5. In Romans 4:5, it is translated “reckoned.” It is a word that speaks of the judicial calculation of God in which He calculates us as righteous.

How dare we then continually calculate another in the church as being bad or evil? Agape love is a love that chooses to forget about previous failures and chooses to focus on the good, not the bad.

It is significant to see that the key to developing a godly, agape love is not emotional but mental. Agape love chooses to think in positive terms, not negative.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #10 – Agape love DOES NOT rejoice in iniquity. **13:6a**

Agape love does not continually find joy in that which is unrighteous or unjust. This includes people, places, programs, professions and passions.

It seems to me that some seem to find their greatest joy in learning about the unrighteousness or sin of a person rather than the righteousness or godly service of a person.

Agape love does not find joy in things unrighteous or unjust.

The greatest example of agape love is Jesus Christ.

God wants certain qualities in the lives of His people. He wants them to be people who love at the highest level, His agape love level.