

# Agape — A Christian Husband's Obligation

By [Jason Jackson](#)

God's love excludes no one (Note: Sadly, many do not respond to the goodness of God, Rom. 2:4-5; cf. Acts 13:32-48.). Christians, the children of God, are called to *agape* their enemies and their brethren (Matt. 5:44; 1 Jn. 4:21). If Christians must love all people, surely Christian men should *agape* their wives. Christian husbands are to love their wives "as Christ also loved the church." (Note: "Agape" is one of several Greek terms translated by the English word love.)

When Paul wrote about the Christian home, he said "This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church" (Eph. 5:32). God designed husbands and wives to be one (Eph. 5:31). What a beautiful revelation. The more we appreciate "Christ and the church," the more we will understand how we ought to behave as Christian spouses. B.F. Westcott wrote the following about Ephesians 5:32:

"This *revelation* of the unity of man and woman in one complex *is* of *great* moment. It opens before us a vision of a higher form of existence, and enables us to feel how parts which at present are widely separated may be combined into some nobler whole without ceasing to be what they are. *But I speak looking to Christ and the church.* In this final union we can see that humanity reaches its consummation" (**St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians**. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1998, p. 86).

Paul instructs husbands to consider Christ, the perfect model for *agape*. Using *agape* as an acrostic, let us study five truths that help us understand the husband's obligation.

**A** is for attitudes and actions. It does not stand for avoidance. It is not a strategic apology to prevent a conflict. Attitudes and actions mean that the husband must think and act like Christ; he ought to be a "Christian husband."

*Agape* is not sentimentality. **It is defined as the husband's love for his wife's soul.** Like Christ who loved, and therefore gave, a Christian husband should be selfless in his attitudes and actions (see 1 Cor. 13:1-8).

**G** stands for goal driven. There is a reason, an eternal reason, for a Christian husband's attitudes and actions. It is the reason for which Jesus "endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2).

Consider the results that Christ sought for the church. He loved the church, so he gave himself for it, "that he might" (1) sanctify it; (2) present it; (3) "that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

Husbands should have the same kinds of goals for their spouses. Husbands should facilitate their wives' spiritual growth. Corresponding to Christ's example, they should contribute to their wives: (1) being set apart and serving others in the Lord (i.e., sanctified); (2) being faithful in all things so that their wives will be "presented" as a part of the church; (3) being vigilant to be "holy and without blemish." The Christian wife ought to be growing with her husband's help — not in spite of his hindrances. The Christian husband must make his home into a spiritual harbor wherein heaven is the goal.

**A** is for always. By its nature, *agape* does not wax and wain. "Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8). In other words, love is not going to be superseded by something better. It must remain as a permanent commitment to the one loved (cf. Rom. 5:8). Therefore, the husband should always be slow to become resentful. He must react good when ill-treated. He should never envy her. He ought to realize his inability to give enough and not report on how much he has given — always. He does not "file faults" or "fly off the handle," because *agape* is not overwhelmed.

**P** stands for principled conduct. This point also makes *agape* distinctive and divine. It means that the husband is called to love because God commands it. (Note: Paul uses the imperative mood to command the husband to *agape* according to Christ's example in Eph. 5:25.)

This love can be learned, and couples can conform to God's will and Christ's pattern. A husband can *agape* his wife even when he is not loved in return. It is not a proper consideration to ask, "Does she really deserve it?" We did not earn Christ's love. He loved us first (1 Jn. 4:19). The Christian husband will **initiate** a concern for his wife's spirituality out of principle — as Christ also loved the church.

**E** is for elevating benefits. *Agape* enhances the self-image of the one loved. "Designed by God, agape is the best medicine for mental health" (Ed Wheat. **Love Life for Every Married Couple**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980, p. 122).

Principled, goal-driven love, can help a spouse through times of significant anxiety. *Agape* can provide stability and emotional security. Divine love makes every day better, braking down walls of defensiveness and quarreling.

A husband, living like God wants him to live, will love his wife like Christ loved the church, giving himself selflessly for her spiritual needs. That is *agape* — a Christian husband's eternally rewarding obligation.

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### Scripture References

Romans 2:4-5; Acts 13:32-48; Matthew 5:44; 1 John 4:21; Ephesians 5:32; Ephesians 5:31; Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 13:8; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 5:25; 1 John 4:19

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