



# FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY DR. JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN  
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES  
P. O. BOX 5695  
ASHEVILLE, NC 28813 U.S.A.

See my blog at [www.stonekingdom.org](http://www.stonekingdom.org)

Issue #194

April 2015

## Varieties of Love

### *Feed My Sheep, Part 1*

While preparing this monograph, a vivid memory appeared in my mind. It was of a scene which I know I had not remembered or thought about in many decades. It happened when I was about seven years old—so this was *way* back in the 1950s.

I can still see myself in the living room with my mom, where she was doing some ironing and had the radio on a station which played the popular hits of the day. Apparently, I was listening to the lyrics—remember, this was before the beginning of rock ‘n’ roll so that you actually could make out the words in those days. I remember asking her, “Mom, why do all the songs talk about love?”

She said, “Well, because love makes the world go ‘round.” That didn’t really make any sense to me. Then she added in a more serious tone that so many songs are about love because “love is the most important thing in the world.”

I think she was right, don’t you? I think the apostle Paul would agree with that also, because notice that he places love at the beginning of this list of the fruit of the Spirit, no doubt to emphasize its importance.

**Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,**

**23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

In Colossians 3, Paul gives another list of the fruit of the Spirit.

**Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;**

**13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**

**14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. [perfection]**

The word “charity” has changed slightly since 1611 (when the King James Version was first published). Today when we hear the word “charity” most of us think merely of one aspect of love, that of giving to the poor. So henceforth, in this study when I quote the KJV and it has the word “charity,” I will substitute the word “love.”

Paul says that *above* all the other fruits, we should strive to practice love, which he says is the tie which binds all the others fruits together in spiritual and moral perfection. In his great treatise on love in 1 Corinthians 13—which we will get to in due time—Paul concludes by saying that the greatest of these is love.

In his gospel, the apostle John states that “God is love.” How much more importance can one place on a word then if it is used to describe the very essence of God Himself? Love is such an enormous topic, where do we begin? Well, I always think that a good place to begin is to understand the definitions of words.

Love is a very common word in the English language. It is used to describe a variety of human emotions and relationships. However, it is unfortunate that our modern English is so imprecise when it comes to

this very important word. We throw the word “love” around in every day language in a multitude of ways. Just think about it as you read these statements:

- He loves chocolate cake.
- She loves the Beatles...or Mozart...or Keith Urban...or Shania Twain, or whatever kind of music one enjoys.
- I love my wife.
- I love my children.
- I love my parents.
- I love my brothers. I love my sisters.

I am speaking of one’s birth family here. In all those cases of familial love, is it exactly the same kind of love in each case? I don’t think so. Do you love your spouse in the same way that you love your parents, your children or your siblings?

- I love my brothers and sisters in Christ—which has a little different meaning there than loving one’s birth family.
- He loves to play golf.
- She loves to crochet.
- Jack and Jill love to play tennis. Yesterday, after three minutes of play, the score was 30-love.
- Bill went to his class reunion. He loved to see his old classmates again.
- When you see our dear friend, Rachel, give her our love, would you?
- The two had an illicit love affair.
- Later that night, Mr. and Mrs. Smith made love.

Even with all the above, I have not covered all the various shades of meanings of how we use the word “love” in English. A similar situation occurs in the Bible. Even limiting ourselves to the Greek scriptures of the New Testament, there are a host of meanings carried by just a few Greek words.

The Greek language at the time of Christ had at least three to five different words for love, and each of them carried a variety of nuanced meanings. We will skip a discussion of the Greek word *eros* because it is not found in the Greek New Testament.

The next is the Greek word *phileo*. Its primary meaning has to do with the *tender affection*. It is a semi-mature kind of love in that a person has some considerable or substantial regard for the needs and

desires of others. Nevertheless, it is far from perfect love.

The great Bible scholar, E. W. Bullinger, says it means “to be fond of, having regard to feeling as distinct from principle. *Phileo* is never used of man’s love to God: this is always *agapao*.”

But the *phileo* love is not totally self-centered. It is often characterized by a 50/50 attitude. I love you as long as you love me. I love you as long as you treat me right. I love you as long as you give me all my rights, or what I *think* are my rights. In other words, if you fulfill my expectations, I will love you and treat you right. But when you hurt my feelings, I might not love you anymore; or at the least, I will love you less.

You see how it is based on feelings? It’s a 50-50 thing. It’s an I’ll-meet-you-halfway type of proposition. Now, I said the Greek has three to five different words for love. The vagueness comes about because there are some words related to *phileo* which one may or may not want to count as separate words.

For example, there is the noun *philanthropia* [fil-an-thro-pee’-ah] which means love of mankind. Obviously, from this Greek word we get our word *philanthropy*. Bullinger says that this word, *philanthropia*, was the common word used by the Greeks for love; it referred to love of man in general. But interestingly, Bullinger adds that this type of love did not go beyond giving a person his “rights.”

Yet we see how it still fits the 50-50 idea: you give me my rights and I’ll give you your rights. *Philanthropia* is somewhat lower on the scale than the NT word *philadelphia* (love of the brethren), because in the Bible, the love of the brethren is several steps further on the road towards the most mature form of love. This highest and most mature form of love is the Greek verb *agapao*, or the noun *agape* (pronounced ah-gah’-pay).

I find the distinctions Bullinger makes in his definitions helpful. He says that *agape* love has regard to favor, which is related to the idea of grace. Bullinger states that *agape* love is “to make much of a thing or person, on principle. *Agape* is spontaneous love; irrespective of ‘rights’.”

*There* is the key; *agape* love is a love that is irrespective of rights. In other words, it is a love that

loves **unconditionally**. It is not self-centered at all. It is not even a 50-50 attitude. It is 100 percent other-centered. It is based upon *principle*, not *feelings*.

It is the principle that I love you because I have made a decision to love you. It is a love based not merely on feelings; because our feelings change every day and even from hour to hour. True, there usually are very strong feelings involved, but the agape-type love is love based on a judgment of the intellect and the will. It is a love based upon a long-term commitment to put the other person first in all things and for all time. Most importantly, *agape love is a love which is demonstrated by our actions*.

It goes without saying that this is the type of love which characterizes a great marriage—a marriage that will last and which will bring forth much beautiful fruit. But agape love is not limited to marital partners. It is that form of love to which all Christians should seek to attain with everyone.

Agape love is the type of love that continues to love *even when we have been hurt*. It is the type of giving love that continues to put the other person first even when the recipient of our love does not reciprocate. There is an overlap here with the concept of jubilee-forgiveness, but that is a topic for another time.

Agape is the type of love that continues to do good even when the recipient of our love treats us badly. If we cannot or will not love like that, then we have not attained agape love, the highest form of love, the love that God seeks from all of us. (At this point I must interject a very important *caveat*. Seeking to achieve agape love does not require, for example, a woman whose husband beats her to remain available as his punching bag. One also has a duty to preserve one's own life!)

The world was totally lost and in sin, offending God daily with heinous crimes, and yet the Bible tells us that...

**John 3:16 For God so loved** [agape-loved] **the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

But God not only desires us to love Him with agape love, but to treat each other in the same manner. Because we read Jesus' words in...

**John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love [agape] one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love [agape] one another.**

These distinctions and definitions of the Greek words which I have just given you are not exhaustive. Remember that when it comes to the Bible, the context always governs the meaning. So do not think that we have even come close to completely defining love in the New Testament. I assure you, we have only scratched the surface with our progression from phileo to philanthropia to philadelphia up to agape.

In the story we're going to study in the gospel of John, we will find both phileo and agape. And there I will show you how we would be totally oblivious to the nuances of this encounter if we only read the English translation. It will be instructive and fruitful for us to take the time to examine this incident which occurred on the shore of the sea of Galilee after the resurrection of our Lord.

Before we come to that, I want us to recognize the parallelism here between the post-resurrection encounter and this incident recorded in Luke which occurred very early in Jesus' ministry as He was issuing the call to Simon Peter to leave his job as a fisherman and to "come, follow me."

**KJV Luke 5:1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,**

**2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.**

**3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.**

**4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.**

**5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.**

**6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.**

**7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should**

come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

**8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**

**9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:**

**10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.**

**11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.**

The parallel is found in that Simon is first called to follow Jesus immediately after a miraculous catch of fish, and then after his denial of Christ, the crucifixion and the resurrection, Peter is restored to his office as an apostle also after a miraculous catch of fish. So now we fast-forward to the scene in John, chapter 21.

John chapter 21 begins where Peter told six of the other disciples—and I will take some literary license here—but I imagine that Peter said: “Well, we’ve seen the Master only twice now since His resurrection, and I haven’t seen Him *lately*, and I don’t know where he went, so I’m going fishing!”

Imagine, here we have these men who have been with Jesus on a *daily* basis for three to three and a half years, and now they haven’t seen Him in a few days and, just like that, Peter is ready to resume his career as a fisherman. That is perhaps understandable because I don’t think that Peter really knew where he stood in the Savior’s eyes. After all, his thrice denial of Jesus was still a bitter taste in his mind.

We can understand that he might have felt that Jesus was perhaps not so keen to be with Peter every day now. This no doubt depressed Peter and so he fell back to his old ways as a fisherman, just as he was when the Lord had first called him. So Peter tells the others, “I’m going fishing!”

The other six said, “Hey man, wait for us. We’ll go with you.” They fished all night and caught nothing—just as it had happened at the beginning! Have you ever had a fishing trip where you fish all day or all night and come back empty handed? I have. But I

never had a fishing trip with the results that Peter and the boys are about to have. Because as the dawn broke over the misty sea of Galilee, they see this guy on the shoreline and he yells out to them, “Children, do you have any food?”

Well, with 2,000 years of hindsight, we can see that when the man on the shore called them “children,” that should have been a dead giveaway as to who He was. I mean, obviously, they’re all grown men and this guy on the shore refers to them as children?!

Can you imagine going down to the fishing docks and seeing a boat with seven big, burly fishermen in it and you holler out to them, “Hey you kids, you got anything to eat?” You’d better hope they hadn’t tied up to the dock yet so that you will have time to get away, because I think they would be quite insulted, don’t you?

But this seemed to go right over the heads of Peter and the gang because John—who was part of the group reports here that they didn’t know it was the Lord yet. So they told the guy that “we haven’t caught a darn thing all night!” Then the man on the shoreline yells out to them, “Drop your net on the *right* side of the boat and you will have a catch.”

Well, what did they have to lose? So they did, and just as at the beginning of the Lord’s ministry... That net was so full that they really had to struggle to haul it in, only this time, the ship didn’t begin to sink, and the net didn’t break. These things are all symbolic but we are going to pass over them at this time because we are heading to the conversational showdown between Peter and the risen Lord.

*(To be continued.)*

**Feed My Sheep** is a part of the teaching ministry of Dr. James W. Bruggeman and it is sent out freely. However, we reserve the right to discontinue sending it at any time to any one. The donations and tithes of those who are blest, taught and fed by this publication make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts can be sent to PO Box 5695, Asheville, NC 28813. Thank you.