

Introduction

The barnacle, a relative of the shrimp, starts life as one of 10,000 microscopic eggs. It grows into a tiny crablike organism, and after about four weeks of floating around it decides to give up life as a drifter and settle down for good. The National Geographic Society provides some interesting facts about the barnacle. The Society calls the barnacle the "world's most solid citizen" because once it settles down for life nothing can move it. Man cannot begin to match the strength of the glue God gave this lowly marine life. Homemade glue from barnacles is the world's strongest, with a shear strength of more than 7,000 pounds per square inch. That is twice the holding power of epoxy glues that help hold a spacecraft together. The crusty barnacle sticks so solidly to ship's bottoms that it takes a jackhammer or sandblaster to knock it loose. Even then, barnacles may pull shreds of steel hull plates with them. Barnacle adhesive softens but still holds firm at temperatures above the melting point of lead, 620 degrees Fahrenheit. At 283 degrees below zero it does not crack or peel. ("Thought for the Month: Barnacles and Watermelons," *Christian Battle Plan*, March, 1974).

Just as God made this marvelous natural glue, so he made a "glue" for human relationships: *love*.

C. S. Lewis writes of four loves, three human and one divine. The three human loves are *Eros*, *Philia* and *Storge*. God's love is *Agapē*.

[C. S. Lewis,
The Four Loves
(New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960),
passim

.] The English word love is an "umbrella" term, translating four different Greek words.

The Three Human Loves

Eros is sexual, romantic, and self-directed love. It is not found in the New Testament. Perhaps it is because *Erōs* (Latin, *Cupid*) was a Greek god with a bad reputation. However, sexual or romantic love is biblical and good in the context of marriage. There is more sexual enjoyment in

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marriage than a promiscuous life style.

Philia is love for a friend, or friendship. The word is found in the New Testament. God made human beings to be social beings. A related Greek word, *koinonia*, is translated "fellowship" or "communion" in the King James Version. (Young, *Young's Concordance*, s.v., "Fellowship"). It includes one's relationship with God and with other believers.

Storgē is family love, which includes affection and maternal instinct. The word is found in classical Greek but not in the New Testament. However, the concept of family love certainly is found in the New Testament. God instituted the family. Family love is weakening today, but there is a strong Christian movement to strengthen family ties in the United States.

The importance of affection for developing infants was scientifically demonstrated by Rene Spitz' study of a foundling home in South America. Ninety-seven babies ranging from three months to three years were given adequate food, clothing and medical care. However, due to lack of personnel, the nurses could not give the babies the affection that they needed. Within three months, bad symptoms began to develop. Within five months, "Most of the babies became shrunken beyond recognition." In their first year of life, twenty-seven children died; seven more in their second year. The twenty-one who remained in the institution were classified as "hopeless neurotics or worse." [Smiley Blanton, M. D., *Love or Perish* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 39-40]. [Rene A. Spitz, MD and W. Godfrey Cobliner, *The First Year Of Life* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1965), 27-31; 277-284].

Why the deterioration in human love? When the human race was *deprived* of the Holy Spirit, it led to moral depravity. However, when the Holy Spirit comes into an individual in the new birth, he brings with him *agapē*. He also restores the human loves into full strength and balance.

The Love of God

Agapē was a relatively colorless Greek word that the writers of the New Testament adopted and infused with new meaning. *Agape* may be defined as "that God-given motivation that seeks the best for the beloved on the highest moral plane." (The writer adapted this

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definition from Robert Cummings' lecture at Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri, ca. 1959). The Hebrew Old Testament counterpart of

agape

is

hesed

, "a loyal covenant-keeping love." ["Divorce and Remarriage," (Springfield, MO: The General Council of the Assemblies of God, August 21, 1973)].

Agapē is not altruism. Altruism is a human substitute for *agape*. Altruism is the giving of one's time for a high and worthy human cause—but why does one do this? One probably does this to reap internal rewards or to balance a conscience gone into the red. If so, then altruism is disguised *eros*—a self-directed love!

Agapē is a concomitant of the Holy Spirit. It is not a human-generated quality, nor is it an abstract quality. Its source is God alone: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (1 John 4:8). Only through the new birth and the indwelling Holy Spirit is one enabled to love as God does.

Talk is cheap, but God proved his love to the world by giving his Son, his most prized treasure. The roots of his love can be traced back into the Old Testament in his dealings with Israel. However, this cherished verse captures the highest expression of his love:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16, KJV)

What is the implication for the believer's self-esteem in this fact? By the act of God loving the believer, God himself declares the believer of great worth. Since God is the ultimate authority, the believer has no choice in the matter if he is going to align himself with God. He must love himself as God loves him!

Assignment: confess aloud before other friends, "God loves me, [insert your name]." Your

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confession will make this truth more personal and it will register on a deeper level of your personality.□

Chapter 13 of my eBook, *How to Raise Your Self-Esteem Using Proven Biblical Principles*.

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