

Abiding in Christ Chapter 7: Agape Higher Order of Love

Loved in the Same Way and Degree As Jesus

John 15:9. “Just as the Father has loved Me I have also loved you. Abide in My love.”

Just as the Father has **loved** Me I have also **loved** you. Just **as** the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Just as the Father has loved **me** I have also loved **you**. Isn't that astonishing? Okay, so who said, “Yeah?” “Just as the Father has loved Me, in exactly the same way that I am loved by the Father, I love you that way; **stay** in My love!” That's intense! There is intensity in the love of God that is awesome. It's enormous! You were not made for ordinary loving and God does not love us with an ordinary love. He's not human. God is not human! Thank God for that, eh? He's divine. He loves you with a love that's so excellent, so astonishing, so outstanding that just being within a mile of it should do something significant in your life. You are not meant to be loved in an ordinary way. And so, when you come under the love of God, you come under something so extraordinary and powerful that it changes your very personality. It changes how you see things. It changes how you think. It changes how you feel. It changes who you are!

A New Word for Love: AGAPE

The word in the Greek for God love is “agape.” What's fascinating is that this word was not a part of the Greek language before Christ. There was no such word for the love that Jesus brought. They had to invent a word in Greek to explain the love of God; and so they invented a

word, “agape”. There was no such word in existence before Christ started preaching. Isn’t that astonishing? I think that is worth a clap. Jesus is the source of total, unconditional love to us, in and from the Father. The love of God is completely unconditional toward you because Jesus Christ has met all the conditions in Himself.

So now the love of God doesn’t depend on you. It doesn’t depend upon how you think, how you see, how you live, what you are doing. It has nothing to do with you. It has nothing to do with your performance as a Christian. You are loved outrageously, because the Father loves the Son in that way. You are totally acceptable to God. You are completely adored by Him because He loves Jesus unconditionally, with absolutely no conditions whatsoever. You are loved like that. Live with it! Live in it! There’s nothing you can do to make God love you more. And there is nothing you can do to make Him love you less. He loves you one hundred percent. He will always love you one hundred percent. The only thing that will change is your ability to feel that love. That will grow. And that will increase!

How About An Upgrade

So it may feel like God loves me more than He did last year. No, He doesn’t. He loves you the same on your worst day as on your best. He’s unchanging! The only thing that changes is your ability to receive that love. And that keeps getting upgraded. Maybe today you could enjoy an upgrade. Yeah? I got upgraded on my flight out here. It’s always nice. I always ask for one. When I go into an airport and I approach the desk, I always say, “Look, I know you’re busy and – but listen – if the flight is full and

you absolutely have to bump somebody up to first class, I want you to know that I'm willing to be victimized. I'm so willing to be victimized. Look no further, I am your victim! Here I am in all my glory, I am here. They may be looking at me and thinking, "Okay, he's weird." But my face sticks in their memory. Sure enough, I got a call. Oh, yeah! It's always worth having to go to the desk to get one. Upgrades! Don't you all love upgrades? It's great to get an upgrade especially on a Trans Atlantic flight. O My, yes! So I used to fly from London to Sydney, Australia, that's like a 37 hour trip. You need an upgrade on that flight because it's a monster.

There was this one time when I walked into the airport and I was approaching ticketing. Suddenly I get this horrible pain in my knee. And I'm asking, "What is that? Dear God, what is that?" As I'm limping up to the desk and they ask, "Are you alright?" And I say, "I just got this horrible pain in my leg, I have no idea where it came from." So, we're checking the flight and I said, "How's the flight looking?" They said, "It's really full. It's actually overfull. And we've got an overbooked situation. The agent looked around and she said, "I'm gonna put you in first-class." I got my ticket and as I'm walking away, suddenly my knee gets a heck of a lot better. And the Lord said to me, "How'd you like that one?" I'm thinking, "Okay. Okay. But let me know next time, eh, because I was about to take authority over something and hadn't realized I'd be taking authority over You."

Resting in Jesus' Confidence of Father's Love

You know the important thing for us here is we must learn to rest in Jesus' confidence concerning being loved. He is totally loved by the Father and we must rest in

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the same confidence in the Father that He does. Yeah! We are totally, unconditionally loved. You need to revel in it. You might even brag about it sometimes. Yeah. You know what? I'm deeply loved by God. So how do you like those apples? Yeah. I'm so loved by God it's incredible. You need to revel in it and trade on it every day. You are loved, wonderfully, incredibly, outrageously, beautifully, marvelously loved. You need to enjoy it, bask in it, rejoice in it and give thanks about it. You need to talk about it. It is your testimony. You need to live in it and trade on it shamelessly. Yeah! You have that right. You need to **feel** outrageously loved.

You need to go to the max of God's intention. Your emotions need to go to a much high level. Now don't get stuck in all this evangelical clap-trap about emotions! God gave you emotions so you could **feel** something. God not only **feels** love, He **is** love. If you think for even a tiny moment that God sent His Son to be brutalized, humiliated and murdered without **feeling** love for you, You are mad! I don't know why evangelicals are so afraid of emotions. What the heck is wrong with that? It's like, well, we can **think about** God, but we can't **feel about** Him. Well, forget that! What is that about? I don't want to love God with only my head. I do love God with my head. I love **thinking about** God. But I also want to have **feelings for** God! Yeah! I want to be affected by the outrageous love of God. I want to feel it from Him to Him. You can keep all that emotionless worship for yourself. It is completely unappealing to me.

Intense emotion is what I want to have for God. I want to feel the intense love of God for me. I want to know the love of God that surpasses knowledge. That

takes you to a **deep place of feeling**. You simply cannot rejoice without feeling. Rejoicing comes out of strong and positive feelings. Oh, yeah! I'm loved! Yeah! I like that! I am no longer an evangelical because God isn't as emotionally sterile as that. I have nothing against evangelicals. I just don't want to be one. And I don't want to be a charismatic either because I'm not even sure that sometimes they aren't just as dumb. I want to be a **cherished** child of God. I don't want to have a label other than "Beloved." I want to be the Beloved of God.

I want to be like Daniel. "Oh, man, greatly beloved of God!" What's Danny boy got for goodness sake? Yeah? I want to be like David, a man after God's own heart! I would like to be as up close and personal with Jesus as John the Apostle. The truth is this. You are greatly beloved already. Just stop denying it and enjoy it. Pursue it! Find out what it feels like and looks like in action. What does that mean Lord? How does **feeling** help in this situation? Someone once said, "It's not what you say or what you do for which you will be remembered. It is **how you made them feel!**" We all want compassion, empathy and love. What does your **love** affect in this situation? What does it mean right here, right now? What does **love** sound like, Father? I want to know! I want to have love that surpasses all thought and knowledge. I want to soak in it. Oh yeah!

Immersed into Jesus' Love

We rest in Jesus' confidence concerning being loved. He is so loved. He revels in it. And I really like that. He is the Beloved Son the Only Begotten of the Father. He is the exact representation of God's likeness and

character, and we are **accepted** in Him. We are accepted in the **Beloved**. And Jesus is the source to release to us everything we need to live **and love** in Him. He is a totally, wonderfully dependable source for everything. The Father has a longing and an intention towards us because He has a longing and intention towards Jesus. So **the Father put you into Jesus so that He could love you in the same way He loves Christ**. I like that. Putting us into Christ means that the Father can fulfill His heart towards the Son in us. That's worth an upgrade in our thinking. We can only get this upgrade in our heart, by the renewing of our mind, which is quite simply changing what we believe, which is not true, back into what is true. Rom 12:2.

The ultimate concern of the Kingdom is to release the agape (love) of God from heaven to earth, so that God's glory may be fully seen in the nature and character of His people. You are meant to be carriers of the love of God. And when that love comes from Heaven to earth it changes everything. No one should be safe **from** a blessing. No one should be safe **from** the love of God when we're around. We should be touching, with love, everyone we meet, especially our enemies. How do you love your enemies? Well, maybe it starts by not seeing them as one.

An Enemy But Not An Enemy

I had a guy come up to me and say "I just want you to know I hate your ministry." I said, "Ok, thanks. I appreciate that." He said, "No, I really hate your ministry. I'm against you. I am your enemy." I said, "Nah, Dude, you can't be." He said, "Yes, I am your enemy." I said, "No, you can't be." He said, "I am! I am your enemy." I

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said, "Nah, trust me you're not." He said, "I'm your enemy." I said, "No, honestly Dude, you can't be." "Why?" "Because today's Tuesday. I don't take enemies on Tuesday." He said, "I'll come back tomorrow." I said, "Yeah, but then it'll be Wednesday. Wednesday is my day for outrageously loving everyone, so come back tomorrow that'll be cool." "I am your enemy!" I said, "Dude you're not! Honestly, you're not!" "Why?" "Because I don't want you to be." It was really frustrating him and it was great. I loved it. He was totally frustrated with me. "I'm against you." "Nah Dude, you can't be. Sorry. Come back Friday though we can have a conversation on Friday." "What's so special about Friday?" "Nothing really, but you know you might get lucky." He just totally didn't know what to do with Himself. You can't be my enemy because I don't choose it! I have a choice in this too. So put that in your pipe and smoke it.

The Holy Spirit Within Us Is Our Agape

We are to love in the same manner and degree that we are loved by the Father. You see, abiding in Christ means allowing the fullness of God's love to become real in me. So I want a continuous on-going experience of the love of God in my life. So, I tell God, "I just want to know Your love today, Father." So, if **He loves me like He loves Jesus**, He's going to do something loving toward me. Eh? When was the last time you asked God to love you? When was the last time you asked the Holy Spirit to comfort you? When was the last time you asked for the joy of your salvation to be restored? You **have not** because you **ask not**. Always ask! Heaven's always open!

The Father is always working to cultivate agape, unconditional love, in you so as **to replicate His love in your life in every situation**. Sometimes we operate in the flesh in situations because we forget to love. All of us do that. I do that. We forget to love. We forget that **love is the currency of Heaven**. It is the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth. And the truth is agape. He has to remind us, “You know, you could have loved there. You had a chance to love, Graham. You missed it! You blew it!” “Oh, yeah. You’re right, I did” “So, do something about it.” We walk in the flesh by default and habit. We need to develop a new habit of surrendering every experience to the Holy Spirit. Then and only then will we be walking **in** the Spirit.

Embrace Learning in Every Failure

I am so confident in God’s love that I no longer fear failure. I’m not worried about failing. **Being anxious about failing reveals that it is my work and not God’s**. So, I focus my attention on **not trying** to do something and simply **trusting God** to do it. And every failure can bring you to a greater **trust and feeling** for God. Unfortunately, I mostly used failure to criticize or get angry with God. But, when you do something for the first time, and make mistakes, you learn how not to do it. Isn’t that true? So the first time you do something you will likely make mistakes, because you haven’t done it before. However, you can embrace it. Consider it **not as a mistake but rather as learning**. You should love the learning.

If you really want to grow in the Holy Spirit, love the learning that comes through life, especially the

adversities. Love the learning that comes through everything. You're not perfect. You're not brilliant – yet. So love the learning that takes you to a higher place of being brilliant. Embrace the learning in every situation. Don't be embarrassed by failure. God isn't. Jesus' crucifixion may have looked like a tremendous failure of God. But, quite the opposite is true.

God chose you knowing that you are weak and foolish and have a history of messing up. He chose you for all the right reasons! Yeah! He's happy with His choice! To be honest, you're just not smart enough to surprise Him. You're not clever enough to disappoint Him. Now come on, the very idea that anyone reading this could disappoint God is insane. Oh, my goodness, get over yourself. The very idea that God could be disillusioned with you or fed up with you is crazy! He doesn't have any illusions about you. He knows exactly what you're like. He knows you on your best day. He knows you on your worst day. He has set His heart on loving you no matter what.

The Solution to Fear Is Perfect Love

“Perfect love casts out fear; there is no fear in love; fear has torment and God is not into torment.” But He is into casting out fear. The fear of failure ... He's against that! For He so loves you in your failings. He's committed to loving you **in** your failings and stepping into your low place and being there for you. He loves being with you. An important part of our abiding is that in agape (love) we must concentrate on being loved perfectly. I am very confident in God's love towards me. I'm so confident in His grace.

Abiding is to live in the deep place of God's love.

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Love is the highest of all affection. It's a love so deep that it humbles you. There have been many times I've cried. I've wept because of how deeply I feel God's love. Especially on the day when I'm being a prized idiot and God comes along and kisses me, it's so humbling. He surrounds you with a love that's so deep, when it comes, it makes you want to be better and bigger! It is a love so intense that it thrills you.

There are times in my walk with God when His love has come so deeply, so powerfully, so strongly, I trembled from head to foot just with excitement. When that occurs, you don't know what to do with yourself. You don't know whether to laugh, cry, jump around, sing, screech running up and down the stairs! I don't know! You don't know what to do with yourself. You are beside yourself. It is love that's so strong that it moves you. You **feel** it deeply. It moves you to do things or write, or paint or sculpt or whatever. This love is a **feeling that moves me to express** something. God's love is so deep, it moves you to creativity.

It's important to be **moved by the love** of God and to understand that there is a creative outlet. When the love of God really touches you deeply, you have to do something. We are undone by agape (love). It's an amazing love that feels beyond you until you are moved by it. Agape produces this deep rest and peace. It is absolutely impossible to be anxious when you experience agape. It's like all anxiety, misery and turmoil are just driven out of you. There's a deep rest. There's a deep peace. There's a joy. There is just an intense feeling of love which instills confidence that anything's possible and everything will be

okay. And it's like your heart draws you into creativity and your head is too.

Agape (love) is strong by definition. It's the strongest emotion that exists. It's powerful. It's effective. And it gives us confidence. Of all people on the face of the earth we are the most confident in God. We have every reason to be confident. We are confident in our expressions towards people. I'm confident of Who God is for me. I'm confident that I can tell anybody "Well, this is what God's like! This is Who He is!" So I have the coolest job there is. I get paid for bragging on God. I love talking to people about Who He is.

Trapped At 39,000 Feet

The main thing I love about plane flights is this. You're trapped in a steel tube at 39,000 feet with 400 people and they can all be victimized by you. Ain't no one getting away from you. I'm always intrigued about who I'm going to sit next to. I always say to my intercessors, "Pray about the person sitting next to me." And sometimes I get some wonderfully obnoxious person, who has a thing against religion -- (Don't we all?) -- and wants to tell me about how much he hates religion.

I'm nodding saying, "Dude, I'm so with you. It's amazing. Have you been talking to God?" "What do you mean?" "Well He says exactly the same thing as you say. Have you and God been having a conversation? That's incredible. The last time I talked to Him about religion, He said exactly what you said! So you know Him then?" "Well, no I don't know Him." "But, you're saying exactly the same thing as He's saying." "I am?" "Yeah, are you

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sure you haven't had a conversation with God. You've never had a conversation with God? Would you like to?"

I've so got him wrapped around that finger and he doesn't even realize it. Hey, listen! This is what I know about God, right? And it's always interesting to me on planes because you always have this wonderfully captive audience. And so you've got to pray that you get to sit next to someone who's really loud and obnoxious because it's like perfect opportunity to preach the gospel. He's going to let the whole cabin know how he feels. And I am so going to mess with his head. So it's interesting because you find yourself just turning up the volume on your own voice box.

You start talking about how God's not like that. "That's very interesting and I appreciate everything you say, but I just want to say one thing. God isn't like that. I have never known God to be like that. This is what God is like." And you look around and you find that the guy behind you has got his nose stuck between the 2 seats and he's listening. And the guy in front of you suddenly pushes his seat back. And he's listening. Cool, that's great! That's fun in my bazaar life. Telling the good news of the Gospel can be that much fun.

Agape Overcomes Every Challenge

Every challenge we meet will be overcome by agape. You'd have to live for a thousand years to get anywhere close to how much God really feels affection for you. It is so deep. It is so broad. It is so profound. And you cannot be separated from it. Not even your own stupidity can separate you from the love of God. I know because I've tried. And the Lord says, "Graham, please!

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I'm God! It's like there is no way. You're just not dumb enough to be separated from Me. Trust Me, you'll never be that dumb that I'll get rid of you. But you just might live to be a profound man who runs with a deep experience of My nature and changes things all around you. How do you feel about that?" "I'd just settle for being less stupid today!" "Deal! You have a deal!"

Every challenge we meet will be overcome by agape. Every relational difficulty is resolved by agape. The wisdom and the revelation of God will always reveal agape in all its beauty and in all its power. It is all about the love of God. You're supposed to have a marvelous experience of being loved. Don't you dare settle for anything less than something majestic. You're supposed to have a marvelous experience of being loved. Please don't settle for anything less. Let your heart pursue God. And don't you dare have a thought in your head that you are not worthy or not good enough! You're good enough because you are in Christ. He's good enough! You are good enough!

Obedience Follows the Affection

Verse 10 -"If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love. Just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Obedience results as a consequence of being outrageously loved and embracing that love. The problem with evangelicals is that they put obedience before love. It must come afterwards. We think of obedience as a performance thing. If you obey the Lord, if you do this, if you do that, then the love of God can come into your life. Nah. That's not true! The outrageous love of God comes and enables us to be

obedient. When you are passionately in love with God and intimate with Him, you want to do everything for the One Who loves you so well and that you love so well. When you are in love, you can't help but try to please the one you love. So obedience comes after love. God **is** love. He chooses love. He can't be any other way. He will always love you. It is Who He is.