

Bible passages to read and meditate upon concerning commitment to Christ & The Cost of Discipleship

RECOMMENDED USE: In your devotional time, read and prayerfully reflect on one passage every day (except Saturday and Sunday) for two weeks. Ask God to speak to you before you read and open yourself to the Holy Spirit's influence. Follow the order given below.

Also, read the accompanying articles on weekends.

Genesis 22 God tested Abraham's love and commitment by asking him to surrender what meant most to him in life. Perhaps Abraham's love for Isaac was beginning to stand between him and God. What might be standing between you and God? Are you willing to surrender it to him?

Deuteronomy 6.1-5 Wholehearted obedience was to be the fruit of love and the path to blessing.

Matthew 4.18-22 What cost would have been involved in these people following Jesus in discipleship?

Matthew 7.13-14 There are only two roads in life, which are you walking?

Matthew 11.28-30 Rest of soul comes through taking up Jesus' yoke. What does that mean?

Mark 8.34-38 Have you come to a point in time where you have consciously and deliberately embraced the call to deny self, take up the cross and follow Jesus? What might tempt you to want to "gain the world" at the cost of your soul?

Luke 6.46-49 Jesus says obedience to his teachings is the outward manifestation of our submission to his Lordship? Is your life characterized by a settled determination to obey the teachings of Jesus in daily life?

Luke 14.25-35 Have you put Jesus ahead of your nearest and dearest? And have you given all of your possessions to Jesus and become a steward rather than an owner of them?

John 14.15, 21-24 Does your love for Jesus produce obedience to his teachings? Is your obedience a fruit of love and not simply duty, preference, guilt or fear?

Romans 12.1-2 Have you made the absolute surrender of yourself to God that Paul urges upon all believers?

1 John 2.1-6 Are you daily seeking to walk as Jesus walked?

LOVE (NOUN AND VERB)

A. Verbs. 1. agapao ^25^ and the corresponding noun agape (B, No. 1 below) present "the characteristic word of Christianity, and since the Spirit of revelation has used it to express ideas previously unknown, inquiry into its use, whether in Greek literature or in the Septuagint, throws but little light upon its distinctive meaning in the NT. Cf, however, <Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5>. "Agape and agapao are used in the NT (a) to describe the attitude of God toward His Son, <John 17:26>; the human race, generally, <John 3:16; Rom. 5:8>, and to such as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ particularly <John 14:21>; (b) to convey His will to His children concerning their attitude one toward another, <John 13:34>, and toward all men, <1 Thes. 3:12; 1 Cor. 16:14; 2 Pet. 1:7>; (c) to express the essential nature of God, <1 John 4:8>. "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, <1 John 4:9,10>. But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, <Rom. 5:8>. It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself, Cf. <Deut. 7:7,8>. "Love had its perfect expression among men in the Lord Jesus Christ, <2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 2:4; 3:19; 5:2>; Christian love is the fruit of His Spirit in the Christian, <Gal. 5:22>. "Christian love has God for its primary object, and expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to His commandments, <John 14:15, 21,23; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; 2 John 6>. Selfwill, that is, self-pleasing, is the negation of love to God. "Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, <Rom. 15:2>, and works no ill to any, <13:8-10>; love seeks opportunity to do good to 'all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith,' <Gal. 6:10>. See further <1 Cor. 13> and <Col. 3:12-14>." From Notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, p. 105. In respect of agapao as used of God, it expresses the deep and constant "love" and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects, producing and fostering a reverential "love" in them towards the Giver, and a practical "love" towards those who are partakers of the same, and a desire to help others to seek the Giver.

2. phileo ^5368^ is to be distinguished from agapao in this, that phileo more nearly represents "tender affection." The two words are used for the "love" of the Father for the Son, <John 3:35> (No. 1), and <5:20> (No. 2); for the believer, <14:21> (No. 1) and <16:27> (No. 2); both, of Christ's "love" for a certain disciple, <13:23> (No. 1), and <20:2> (No. 2). Yet the distinction between the two verbs remains, and they are never used indiscriminately in the same passage; if each is used with reference to the same objects, as just mentioned, each word retains its distinctive and essential

character. Phileo is never used in a command to men to "love" God; it is, however, used as a warning in <1 Cor. 16:22>; agapao is used instead, e. g., <Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 8:3; 1 Pet. 1:8; 1 John 4:21>. The distinction between the two verbs finds a conspicuous instance in the narrative of <John 21:15-17>. The context itself indicates that agapao in the first two questions suggests the "love" that values and esteems (cf. <Rev. 12:11>). It is an unselfish "love," ready to serve. The use of phileo in Peter's answers and the Lord's third question, conveys the thought of cherishing the Object above all else, of manifesting an affection characterized by constancy, from the motive of the highest veneration. See also Trench, Syn., Sec. xii. Again, to "love" (phileo) life, from an undue desire to preserve it, forgetful of the real object of living, meets with the Lord's reproof, <John 12:25>. On the contrary, to "love" life (agapao) as used in <1 Pet. 3:10>, is to consult the true interests of living. Here the word phileo would be quite inappropriate. Note: In <Mark 12:38>, KJV, thelo, "to wish," is translated "love" (RV, "desire").

B. Nouns. 1. agape ^26^, the significance of which has been pointed out in connection with A, No. 1, is always rendered "love" in the RV where the KJV has "charity," a rendering nowhere used in the RV; in <Rom. 14:15>, where the KJV has "charitably," the RV, adhering to the translation of the noun, has "in love." Note: In the two statements in <1 John 4:8> and <16>, "God is love," both are used to enjoin the exercise of "love" on the part of believers. While the former introduces a declaration of the mode in which God's love has been manifested <vv. 9,10>, the second introduces a statement of the identification of believers with God in character, and the issue at the Judgment Seat hereafter <v. 17>, an identification represented ideally in the sentence "as He is, so are we in this world." 2. philanthropia ^5363^ denotes, lit., "love for man" (phileo and anthropos, "man"); hence, "kindness," <Acts 28:2>, in <Titus 3:4>, "(His) love toward man."# Cf. the adverb philanthropos, "humanely, kindly," <Acts 27:3>. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words) (Copyright (C) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

LOVE

The high esteem which God has for His human children and the high regard which they, in turn, should have for Him and other people. Because of the hundreds of references to love in the Bible, it is certainly the most remarkable book of love in the world. It records the greatest love story ever written-- God's unconditional love for us that sent His Son to die on the cross <John 3:16; 1 John 4:10>. Love is not only one of God's attributes; it is also an essential part of His nature. "God is love," the Bible declares <1 John 4:8,16>-- the personification of perfect love. Such love surpasses our powers of understanding <Eph. 3:19>. Love like this is everlasting <Jer. 31:3>, free <Hos. 14:4>, sacrificial <John 3:16>, and enduring to the end <John 13:1>. Two distinct Greek words for love appear in the Bible. The word phileo means "to have ardent affection and feeling"-- a type of impulsive love. The other word agapao means "to have esteem" or "high regard." In the memorable

conversation between Jesus and Peter, there is a play upon these two words <John 21:15-17>. Jesus asked, "Simon, do you love [esteem] me?" But Peter replied, "You know that I love [have ardent affection for] You." Then Jesus asked, "Simon, do you love [have ardent affection for] Me?" And Peter responded that his love was agape love-- a love that held Jesus in high esteem and which was more than a fleeting feeling. The warm word agape is the characteristic term of Christianity. This word for love is used several different ways in the Bible. 1. Agape love indicates the nature of the love of God toward His beloved Son <John 17:26>, toward the human race generally <John 3:16; Rom. 5:8>, and toward those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ <John 14:21>. 2. Agape love conveys God's will to His children about their attitude toward one another. Love for one another was a proof to the world of true discipleship <John 13:34-35>. 3. Agape love also expresses the essential nature of God <1 John 4:8>. Love can be known only from the actions it prompts, as seen in God's love in the gift of His Son <1 John 4:9-10>. Love found its perfect expression in the Lord Jesus. Christian love is the fruit of the Spirit of Jesus in the believer <Gal. 5:22>. Love is like oil to the wheels of obedience. It enables us to run the way of God's commandments <Ps. 119:32>. Without such love, we are as nothing <1 Cor. 13:3>. Such Spirit-inspired love never fails <1 Cor. 13:8> but always flourishes. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) (Copyright (C) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

HEART

kardia ^2588^, "the heart" (Eng., "cardiac," etc.), the chief organ of physical life ("for the life of the flesh is in the blood," <Lev. 17:11>), occupies the most important place in the human system. By an easy transition the word came to stand for man's entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements. In other words, the heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life. "The Bible describes human depravity as in the 'heart,' because sin is a principle which has its seat in the center of man's inward life, and then 'defiles' the whole circuit of his action, <Matt. 15:19,20>. On the other hand, Scripture regards the heart as the sphere of Divine influence, <Rom. 2:15; Acts 15:9>.... The heart, as lying deep within, contains 'the hidden man,' <1 Pet. 3:4>, the real man. It represents the true character but conceals it" (J. Laidlaw, in Hastings' Bible Dic.). (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words) (Copyright (C) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

HEART

seat of moral nature and spiritual life, the seat of grief, <John 14:1; Rom. 9:2; 2 Cor. 2:4>; joy, <John 16:22; Eph. 5:19>; the desires, <Matt. 5:28; 2 Pet. 2:14>; the affections, <Luke 24:32; Acts 21:13>; the perceptions, <John 12:40; Eph. 4:18>; the thoughts, <Matt. 9:4; Heb. 4:12>; the understanding, <Matt. 13:15; Rom. 1:21>; the reasoning powers, <Mark 2:6; Luke 24:38>; the imagination, <Luke 1:51>; conscience, <Acts 2:37; 1 John 3:20>; the intentions, <Heb. 4:12>, cf. <1 Pet. 4:1>; purpose, <Acts 11:23; 2 Cor. 9:7>; the will, <Rom. 6:17; Col. 3:15>; faith, <Mark 11:23; Rom. 10:10; Heb. 3:12>. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words) (Copyright (C) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

HEART

The heart, in its moral significance in the OT, includes the emotions, the reason and the will. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words) (Copyright (C) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)