

The Litmus Test of Love - April 27, 2022

Life is full of tests, whether we like it or not. All the way through my school years, as a child and an adult, I experienced a high level of anxiety during tests. A study at UCLA has determined that between 40-60 % of students and adults experience test anxiety. The underlying reasons for this anxiety could be widely different. Here are a few potential reasons :

- An undiagnosed learning difference,
- Not knowing how to study for your learning style
- An environment where there is no either no emotional support or guidance
- Being underprepared

Take your pick. Most of us have experienced one if not more of these reasons to underachieve.

This Sunday, Pastor Dave White shared with us a message about love centered around 1 John 3:16-18. We learned about the four different Greek words for love. Here is an oversimplified recap:

- Storge: Love of family and home
- Eros: Romantic love
- Philia: Friendship love
- Agape: Choice or covenantal love

Agape is the word for love in 1 John 3:16-18. Here is the passage in the Amplified version:

(16) By this we know [and have come to understand the depth and essence of His precious] love: that He [willingly] laid down His life for us [because He loved us]. And we ought to lay down our lives for the believers. (17) But whoever has the [c]world's goods (adequate resources), and sees his brother in need, but has no compassion for him, how does the love of God live in him? (18) Little children (believers, dear ones), let us not love [merely in theory] with word or with tongue [giving lip service to compassion], but in action and in truth [in practice and in sincerity, because practical acts of love are more than words].

Our agape for each other is a litmus test of our walk with Jesus. It is knowing and doing the right thing with sincerity of heart and purpose. This is a test that any follower of Jesus should never fail. And yet, we do fail because there is too much of ourselves in the way. Meditating on this passage should bring us to a prayer of, "What would You have me to do, Lord? Please show me how I can agape (choose covenantal love) with my brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ". How can we practically serve each other? After all, we should have compassion toward each other. The opposite of love is not hate, but apathy.

Pop Quiz: What is your first gut reaction when you hear about a need in the church?

Jesus said in John 13:34-35 (AMP):

(34) I am giving you a new commandment, that you [f]love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too are to love one another. (35) By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love and unselfish concern for one another."

Here is the footnote: “(f)The key to understanding this and other statements about love is to know that this love (the Greek word agape) is not so much a matter of emotion as it is of doing things for the benefit of another person, that is, having an unselfish concern for another and a willingness to seek the best for another.”

Agape love is the mark of being a child of God. All of us have something to share to meet practical needs. There doesn't need to be a big show about our response, in fact, our right hand doesn't need to know what our left hand is doing. It may not be financial. Time interceding in prayer is one of the most practical and powerful responses to needs that can happen. But if while you are interceding, the Holy Spirit leads you to do something, obey Him.

So, here are some more questions to pray about:

- What is the motivation for my actions?
- Am I self-serving or willing to give my resources to others in need?
- If my motto is “Love God and love others” what are some practical ways that I can do that?
- Am I allowing the world to desensitize my reaction to needs through media and culture?
- Do I allow being religious (like a Pharisee) to pick and choose who and how I love?
- Am I apathetic?
- Am I afraid of being uncomfortable?

Dear family, a sincere and honest cry to God will not go unheard. We have all we need to pass this test. Yes, we need to repent, allow God to fill us with His Spirit, and make the choice to agape, agape, agape!