

## Knowledge

This is the most common word for knowledge in the New Testament. It is what happens to every infant as they grow to become an adult. Knowledge can only come as a result of learning and experiencing new things.

**ginoskō** ... appears a total of 222 times in the NT, **gnōsis** appears 29 times... One learns or comes to know a fact from information; it becomes (is) known (Mt 6:3; 12:15; ... ["he knew" = "he learned/perceived"; Lk. 1:4; 7:37; 24:18; ... "that you may know," i.e., see]; Phil 4:5 ... The information comes through letters (2 Cor 2:4 ["I wrote . . . to let you know"]; Phil 1:12 ["I want you to know" = "I want to communicate to you"; ..."] (Exegetical Dictionary NT:1097; 1108)

**ginosko**... the intelligent comprehension of an object or matter, whether this comes for the first time, or comes afresh, into the consideration of the one who grasps it ("to come to know," "to experience," "to perceive [again]") or whether it is already present ("to perceive"). (Kittel NT 1097)

**gnōsis**, fem. noun from **ginosko** (1097), to know. Knowledge. **Present and fragmentary knowledge as contrasted with epignōsis** (1922), **clear and exact knowledge which expresses a more thorough participation in the object or knowledge** on the part of the knowledgeable subject. ... (I) **The power of knowing, intelligence, comprehension** ... (II) **Subjectively** spoken of **what one knows, knowledge** ... (III) **Objectively** spoken of **what is [can be akh] known, the object of knowledge, generally knowledge, doctrine, science** (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:1108)

It is evident from these definitions that the Greek word follows the English. Knowledge in the Scriptures is founded upon a fear and respect for God.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. Pr. 1:7*

Anything we learn from the Scriptures that is not founded upon this premise will not lead to the true goal as it will not lead to faith and submission. The Scriptural progression is set forth in a variety of ways. Beginning with those who have a lack of knowledge, the end result is destruction.

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. Hos 4:6*

The parallel between children who must learn to function in this world and God's children who must learn to function both in this world and in the spiritual realm that surrounds it is often used. The infant who longs for his mother's milk is used to illustrate what Christians should desire.

*Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 1 Peter 2:1-3*

The knowledge gained by children who go to school to learn is also used by the Holy Spirit to emphasize the same need for Christians.

*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:12-14*

No matter how much we know before we become a Christian, everything changes so much and becomes so new that we must relearn everything and renew our mind on everything.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Cor. 5:17-18*

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Rom 12:1-2*

We cannot trust any knowledge gleaned that has not been validated and proven by God's word.

Everything is new! Everything must be reevaluated and reassessed. It must all be proved and pass the test of God's word. We can't use our parents, culture, or conscience to determine the best way to work, be a husband/wife or mother/father. We must assess what God has to say about the subject.

*O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*  
Jer. 10:23

We must not underestimate the dangers we face. We don't know which path is safe, which path leads to wisdom and success. God has often been disappointed by the lack of *knowledge* and preparation in His people. They were often unprepared for the rigors of spiritual life. Many failed because they didn't gain the necessary skills to succeed. No one can succeed without God's help and counsel:

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.* Pr. 14:12

*Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*  
Mt. 7:14

This is so obvious to us when we are traveling to an area we have never been before. We always get a road map or seek directions. When we purchase a new product, we want an owners manual to study, when we are cooking something for the first time, we want the exact recipe. When we are taking something apart, we want a repair manual to guide us.

The *excellence* in *achievement* and *mastery* that defines virtue must be directed toward learning God's Word. The effort, labor and toil we direct toward such *knowledge* will be abundantly rewarded. There is nothing we can desire that will more richly repay us than a mastery of the Word of God and the wisdom it brings! Over and over God promised great blessings. Honor, peace, wealth, long life and decreased trouble are offered to those who set their hearts to this challenge:

*When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, 11 Discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, 12 To deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things,* Pr. 2:10-12

When a man with virtue is seeking *knowledge* he will feel the same way as the author of Psalm 119.

*24 Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors... 97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. 98 You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. 102 I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me. 103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. 106 I have sworn and confirmed That I will keep Your righteous judgments.* Ps. 119:24, 97-106

Those who make God's word a delight and counselor for guidance in all troubles will find great blessings. We must love God's law! Think about it all the time! It will make us wiser than those who seek to destroy us. It will help us understand more than both teachers and the aged ones who have gleaned all the wisdom living in this life brings. Even the experiences of this life cannot offer the same understanding God's word does! Life leaves too many pieces out of the puzzle. No one can see the whole picture without the understanding God put in His Word!

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.* Ps. 19:7-11

In this passage, the value of God's word is set forth for what it does for man. It is perfect, and able

to convert souls from death to life. It is sure, making simple people wise. It is right, giving great joy and pleasure to the heart of those who find it. It is pure, enlightening the eyes of all who cannot see. It is clean, and endures forever and ever. This is what makes God's Word so desirable. There is great reward both in this life and in the life to come.

Paul's final words to Timothy are a fitting way to conclude the value and scope of adding knowledge:

*But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*  
2Tim. 3:14-17

Timothy had made the *knowledge* of God's Word one of life's greatest goals, and challenges since early childhood. He had placed his sights on excellent achievement and mastery in the *knowledge* of God's Word. Paul exhorted him to continue in the things he had learned and never forget that the Holy Scriptures had made him wise unto salvation. Because it was inspired by God, it is profitable for proper understanding of doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction. Those who master them are complete, thoroughly equipped to accomplish every good work. Brethren give diligence! We will be repaid a hundredfold for every hour we spend learning and growing in the *knowledge* of Scripture!

*Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* Josh. 1:7-9

## **Self - Control**

The progression from virtue to knowledge and from knowledge to self control is easily seen in Paul's words to the Corinthians about Olympic contenders.

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.* 1Cor. 9:24-27  
(NASB)

To compete in the games, one must have the powerful desire of *virtue* that will lead them on their quest for *excellence of achievement* and *mastery*. It takes great sacrifices of time, energy and even pain to reach a level to win such a race.

But even with the greatest desire, it will never happen without a good coach who can train and give the *knowledge* necessary to make the right decisions and do the right things. Yet *virtue* and *knowledge* are only preparatory. They give the opportunity for success, but to the desire for excellence and the wisdom to make just the right sacrifices must be added *self-control*!

Without *self-control*, the hours of dedication necessary to train will never happen. Those who want to win (*virtue*) and know how to win (*knowledge*), still must push ourselves beyond what others will endure (*self-control*) to actually win the race.

For every Christian, *virtue* and *knowledge* will always need *self-control* to get to the next level. Without *self-control*, *virtue* and *knowledge* will can only lead to heartache and sorrow. The gap between what we know we should do and want to do must always be narrowing or our conscience will condemn us. After we have the knowledge to "test all things;" we must gain the self-control to "hold fast what is good," and "abstain from every form of evil" (1Th. 5:21-22).

The root meaning of self-control is power, lordship, and dominion.

*“egkrateia (akrasia) egkrates (akrates) egkrateuomai ... 1. The word group egkrat- takes its sense from the stem krat- which denotes power or lordship and which expresses the power or lordship which one has either over oneself or over something... having power in oneself, ...NT:1466 ... egkrateia thus means the "dominion which one has over oneself or something" in the sense that one may or may not have it, that one can bear it, that one thus controls it, ... In the NT the word group is not found at all in the Gospels. Kittel, TDWNT 1466)*

*enkrateia (NT:1466) self-control; ... enkrateuomai (NT:1467) exercise self-control... enkrates (NT:1468) chaste ... 1. In the philosophical ethic of the Greek classical period and of later Hellenism, egkrateia (from the stem krat- which refers to power and dominance) plays a significant role. ... egkrateia is normally used with regard to all human desires, including desires for food and drink, sex, and conversation. Thus egkrates signifies the free, autonomous, and independent person, who does not allow himself to be tempted or diverted by any allurements.... The egkrat- word group appears only 7 times ... in the NT: the noun in Acts 24:25; Gal 5:23; and 2 Peter 1:6 (bis), the verb in 1 Cor 7:9 and 9:25, and the adjective in Titus 1:8. In Galatians, Titus, and 2 Peter these words appear in catalogs of virtues and designate the opposite of aselgeia ...” (Exegetical Dictionary NT:1466)*

*Self-control brings dominion over our entire life. With self-control, all thoughts, words, actions and plans are within our power to stop. Self-control is the ability to master, curb, control and restrain ourselves. It places us as ruler with lordship over our mind, body, and emotions. We direct them and never allow them to direct us. We all have the power of lordship, but it is up to us to take it. This is what Paul meant when he said “I buffet my body and make it my slave.” The only real reason we ever succumb to any temptation is lack of self-control. God always makes a way of escape.*

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1Cor. 10:13*

*Self-control gives us the time and the ability to find the way of escape. If we don't find the way of escape, then there will be a problem with our “virtue” our “knowledge” or our self-control.” The power and lordship we exert within ourselves with any enticement can lower the level of temptation to a level where we can bear it.*

*The definition of temptation makes this obvious. “Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed” (Jas. 1:14). If the lust is mastered, curbed, controlled and restrained the “the way of escape” can be found and taken.*

*Jesus demanded that our level of self-control must accept all pain and loss.*

*“And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire. 9 “And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the fiery hell.” Mt. 18:8-10*

*We dare not take this lightly. There is much more we could do to master and curb ourselves if we were willing to take on the necessary pain and sacrifice. Remember how Peter began this section. God gave us His divine power and godliness through the gospel and along with precious and exceeding great promises. Through these we **have been made** a partaker of the divine nature and **escaped** the corruption in the world by lust. Since these gifts were given by grace, we must see each event that leads back to corruption as a failure and sign of weakness. We must repent and begin again. We must buffet our body, resist even unto blood, and fight the good fight of faith.*

*Our present level of self-control is a combination of past victories, paths averted and the agonizing crucifixion of lusts and desires tasted in the past. But it is also hindered by our failures and the excuses we make. We all tie ourselves to sin by the threads of habit we create each time we give in to temptation. When we succumb to temptation we strengthen the habit and bind ourselves more strongly to it. Habits must be broken the same way they were created: One thought and one deed at a time. But because we are under grace, sin can never take full dominion again because we can*

seek forgiveness and begin again.

Jesus used the image of His own cross to give us the means to create and learn to use our own.

*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Lk. 9:23*

*Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" Lk. 14:27*

*And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. Mt. 10:38-39*

Those who truly seek to follow and come after Jesus must deny themselves (*exercise self-control*). If we don't add self-control to our faith then we are unable carry our own cross and CANNOT be His disciple!

The cross is the weapon Jesus gave us to give up pleasures, relationships, bad habits or even our life and self-control is the only thing lacking. Think about it. When we are "*tempted and enticed*" it feels like agony to deny it. Our lusts demand fulfillment and intensify as we deny them. Yet, "*those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal. 5:24).

While the grace and mercy of God have been given to give us the opportunity to repent, they also teach us the absolute necessity of exercising self-control and self-denial.

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, Titus 2:11-12*

## **Perseverance**

The initial fire, zeal, and excitement of becoming a Christian from God's precious and exceedingly great promises can last for years for some and months or even weeks in others. There is no way to predict when or how, but sooner or later something will occur of an unexpected nature. *Perseverance* is God's remedy and solution. As Job found, can't count on emotions forever. Sooner or later they will be exhausted.

The need for *perseverance* can arise due to discouragement and disillusionment, or it can arise from the desire to return to the pleasures of sin. With Job, it was the loss of possessions, health and the erroneous comfort of the three friends. With Elijah, it was the joy of the victory against the prophets of Baal that came crashing down when he realized it had not accomplished what he had hoped (1Kings 19:1-4; 8-18). With Moses it was the grinding pressure of the unfaithful children of Israel (Num. 11:10-15). Jesus also spoke of those who must face tribulations or persecutions.

*But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who **believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away**. 14 Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are **choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity**. 15 But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, **having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience (hupomone)**. Lk. 8:13-15*

Jesus warned that all of His servants would begin their service to Him with joy. Yet for some it would be tribulation and persecution, and for others it would be the cares, riches, and pleasures of life. Only those who bear fruit with perseverance will bear fruit and manifest a noble and good heart.

The progression of these things is still evident. *Virtue* produces the desire for *knowledge*. *Knowledge* reveals the efforts we must put forth. *Self-control* puts forth the efforts. The need for *perseverance* arises when these three things feel overwhelming. Using Paul's Olympic contender, after months or even years of training, if he becomes discouraged, he will need perseverance.

This was a quality manifested by Job and all the prophets:

*My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who **endured** (hupomeno). You have heard of the*

**perseverance** (*hupomone*) of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord-- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. Jas. 5:11

The Holy Spirit chose the very common word of living, remaining or abiding under something. We *persevere* when we do not leave, stop or remove ourselves from being under the trial, tribulation or circumstances that are pressuring us to quit or give up.

*“hupomone... 1. steadfastness, constancy, endurance... in the NT the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings... 2. a patient, steadfast waiting for... 3. a patient enduring, sustaining...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5281)

*“hupomone perseverance, patience; expectation ... while hupomene occurs 80-85 times in the LXX, and “hupomone 25 times, the NT uses the verb only 17 times and the noun 32 times. ... Derived from hupomene, “hupomone refers to steadfastness and perseverance “under” certain circumstances, and also to remaining expectant in the face of passing time. ... In standard Greek hupomone refers overwhelmingly — and positively — to independent, unyielding, defiant perseverance in the face of aggressive misfortune, and thus to a kind of courageousness; in the negative sense it refers also to the enduring of humiliation* (Exegetical Dictionary NT:5281)

*In the first instance hupomenein is ethically neutral. It simply means “to hold out.” But as hupomone later came to hold a prominent place in the list of Greek virtues, so there predominates in hupomenein the concept of the courageous endurance which manfully defies evil. Unlike patience, it thus has an active content. It includes active and energetic resistance to hostile power, though with no assertion of the success of this resistance. ... Ethically hupomenein may be a brave resistance which honors man ... or a cowardly acceptance of what degrades man, In most of the NT passages hupomenein refers to the steadfast endurance of the Christian under the difficulties and tests of the present evil age. ...”* (Kittel, TDWNT NT:5281)

*We may proceed now to distinguish between these; and this distinction, I believe, will hold good wherever the words occur; namely, that makrothumia will be found to express patience in respect of persons, hupomone in respect of things. The man makrothumei, who, having to do with injurious persons, does not suffer himself easily to be provoked by them, or to blaze up into anger (2 Tim 4:2). The man hupomenei, who, under a great siege of trials, bears up, and does not lose heart or courage...”* (Trench's Synonyms NT:5281)

Perseverance compels us to remain under any trial, temptation or tribulation. It leads us to continue serving the Lord even when pleasures, cares or riches seek to draw us away. There are several synonyms for *perseverance*. When we *endure* and *bear up* under trials, or when we are *steadfast* and *patient* in our service to the Lord we manifest *perseverance*.

This is exactly how James began his book. He wanted all servants of God to understand that the beginning of *perseverance* occur when we feel a sense of joy at the prospect of having to endure trials, because we recognize their value.

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (hupomone). 4 But let patience (hupomone) have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. Jas. 1:2-6*

Enduring difficult circumstances test the depth and quality of our faith. Satan revealed his attitude toward God's servants when he told God that if the tribulation were strong enough Job would fail and his faith would falter. Job took the test in stride and never thought once about it. This is exactly what James revealed. All tribulations, trials and difficulties test our faith. All the good things we enjoy that seek to choke out the word are also tests of our faith. Finding ways to endure and conquer them is the joy of falling into these trials.

Paul charted exactly the same process, but began as Peter did with the grace and mercy of God that had placed us in the position where these trials could produce such wonderful fruit.

*Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; 2 through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope*

of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation works perseverance 4 and perseverance approvedness; and approvedness, hope: Rom. 5:1-4

Because “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2Pet. 1:3), we are now “justified by faith,” and “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We feel great joy and rejoicing because of the *precious and exceeding great promises* He has given to us. After we add *perseverance*, it becomes the same joy that enters our heart when we begin a trial or tribulation. A polishing or sharpening stone takes a small amount of metal with each stroke, wearing it down. Yet it also polishes and sharpens the knife or sword. In exactly the same way tribulations polish and sharpen our character creating *perseverance*. Tribulation actually “works” *perseverance*.

*“katergazomai... a. to perform, accomplish, achieve [RV often work]... b. to work out... i.e. kto do that from which something results... bring about, result in,...”* (Thayer, p. 339; 2716)

All tribulations “perform, accomplish, and achieve” *perseverance*. They “bring about” and “result in” *perseverance*. Yet tribulations and trials not only bring about *perseverance*, but also “approvedness - tested in battle,” “reliable,” “trustworthy,” and *hope*. Every tribulation we pass through proves our faith is genuine and thus more precious than gold.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 1:6-8*

This is an endurance and perseverance that leads us to run.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with **endurance (hupomone)** the race that is set before 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him **endured (hupomeno)** the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has **endured (hupomeno)** such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart Heb. 12:1-3*

Jesus stands at the very pinnacle of *perseverance*. Jesus manifested *perseverance* in its greatest and most powerful value! He used it to face the cross and the hostility of sinners. He too felt that fierce joy of knowing the great good that would come from His enduring the cross.

No matter how difficult things become, God has high expectations of His people. As Job and Abraham before us, their *perseverance* led to *approvedness*, for they passed the test. By adding *perseverance* to our faith, we stand prepared. For we all have need of *endurance (perseverance)*.

*For you have need of endurance (hupomone), so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Heb. 10:36-39*

## **Godliness**

*Godliness* is primarily focused upon our relationship with God. It begins with our sense of His presence. As we give thanks for all things, pray without ceasing, and worship in spirit and truth, our consciousness of God continues to grow. As we look at His material creation and through the things that are made become more aware of His everlasting power and divinity, our awe, reverence and respect also increase. As we look into the Scriptures, and witness His complete control over how things unfold, and how His providence often intervenes to bring about the end He desires, along with His wisdom, omnipotence, our confidence is enhanced. Through the great cloud of witnesses we become aware of His mercy, lovingkindness and forgiveness. As we grow in our understanding of the great sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf, and the love God manifested by sending Him to save us from our own sins, our hearts are drawn ever nearer to Him.

It is within this nurturing environment that godliness thrives and develops. It “sacred awe,” and an energetic response of devotion, reverence and a “Godward attitude.”

*eusebeia*... from *eu*, well, and *seboimai*, to be **devout**, denotes the piety which, **characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him...** (Vine, Vol 2 p. 162).

*eusebeia*... **reverence, respect**; in the Bible *piety towards God, godliness...* (Thayer, p. 262; 2150)

*eusebes*... from *eu*, well, *sebomia* to **reverence**, the root *seb-* signifying **sacred awe, describes reverence exhibited especially in actions, reverence or awe well directed... the energy which, directed by holy awe of God, finds expression in devoted activity...** In the NT it is used of a pious attitude towards God, Acts 10:2,7..." (Vine vol 1, P. 308)

Those who are adding godliness to their faith are always aware of God's presence, and they respond with joy when they know God is pleased and godly sorrow, repentance and confession when we have sinned and fallen short of His glory. We see Him everywhere and acknowledge Him in everything.

*As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? Ps. 42:1-2*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, 5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Ps. 103:1-5*

*O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. 2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. 4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. Ps. 63:1-4*

These passages reveal the true expression of godliness. As Paul warned Timothy of those who simply use a feigned godliness to gain praise or wealth, he is to exercise himself toward true godliness. This is exactly what Peter is encouraging us to do.

*7 ...exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 1 Tim 4:7-9*

Godliness changes everything. As we see to increase our gratitude and appreciation for God's help and our relationship with Him as both Creator and Redeemer, we are exercising ourselves and adding godliness. *Godliness* is the intense need for God's favor and approval. We look to Him and think of His feelings before we do anything. At the end of each day we think about how God saw what we did that day. We can learn to find great pleasure in going where God leads, being what God wants us to be, and wanting to do all God asks of us. All of this because we respect and love Him on the one hand and because they are right and in our best interests on the other.

When we finally begin to grasp the true significance of the *day of the Lord* and understand that all our effort and toil here is destined to be burned up and dissolved we will begin to see the true value of *holy conduct* and *godliness*.

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and **godliness**, 2Pet. 3:10-12*

Now **godliness** with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. *1Tim. 6:6-7*

Godliness begins when our self esteem and worth come from spiritual things. When how God looks upon us is the most important thing in our life. When devotion and service to Him are the highest priority. All material things are temporary. They are going to dissolve, and we will carry nothing away. It is "*godliness with contentment*" that is our greatest gain. This won't happen without



exercise. We have to learn to “*exercise toward godliness.*”

Paul used “*gymnasia*” from which comes our English, “*gymnasium.*” Those who go to the gym, are there to exercise. The exercises vary depending on the goal. A boxer, Olympic gymnast, runner, basketball player, swimmer or just to be fit and trim, all enter a gym with different expectations and different equipment needs. Some need a pool, others a weight room, or basketball court, while others need to a boxing ring or gymnastic equipment. Each sport has its own exercises that lead to its mastery. There are also spiritual exercises that lead to mastery of *godliness.*

Each of us will have to select the specific exercises to work with our character and needs. The goal is to get our senses exercised to discern good and evil, and to run with patience the race set before us. To fight the good fight, to finish to course and to keep the faith. God has given His people the specific equipment and exercises necessary to become proficient and ultimately a master at *godliness.*

<b><u>Thanksgiving</u></b>	<b><u>Worship in Spirit and Truth</u></b>
1Th. 5:18 In everything give thanks; this is God’s will	Heb. 10:24-25 Not forsaking our own
Eph. 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things to God	Jas. 1:19ff Swift to hear, trembling; Acts 2:42;
Col. 3:15,17 Be thankful; give thanks to God the Father	Eph. 5:19 Making melody in our hearts to the Lord
Heb. 13:15 Let us continually offer sacrifice of praise the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name	1Cor. 14:16 Saying AMEN with understanding-
<b><u>Prayer:</u></b>	1Cor. 11:23ff Discerning body in remembrance
1Th. 5:17 Pray without ceasing	2Cor. 9:7 Not grudging for God loves cheerful giver
Col. 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer	<b><u>Bible Reading and Meditation</u></b>
Eph. 6:18 Pray always with all prayer	Read/Hear- Deut 6:6-9; 11:18-21; Jas 1:19-22
Rom. 12:12 Continuing steadfastly in prayer	Meditate: Josh 1:8-9 Ps 1:1-2;
1Pet. 4:7 Serious and watchful in your prayers.	Eph. 1:18-19 Enlighten our heart with knowledge.
	Pr. 23:23 Buy the truth, and do not sell it
	2Tim. 2:15 Be diligent ... approved to God... rightly dividing the word of truth.
<b><u>A Vessel for Honor 2Tim. 2:20-22</u></b>	<b><u>Love not the World 1 Jn 2:15-17</u></b>
2Pet. 1:3-11 Diligently add to your faith	Lk. 9:23 Deny yourself; Take your cross daily
Gal. 5:22-23 Fruits of the Spirit	Col. 3:5- Put to death members on the earth
Eph. 6:10-16 Put on whole armor of God	Eph. 4:17-5:21 Put off old man / put on new
Mt. 5:1-12 Blessed are . . .	Gal. 5:19-21 Crucify the lusts of the flesh
Phil. 4:8 Think on these things	Rom. 1:28-32 Don’t consent with those who practice
1Th. 5:20-21 Prove all things; hold fast to good; abstain from every form of evil.”	
Eph. 5:9 proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord	

When these things lead us to “***Godward attitude that does what is well-pleasing to Him.***” we are exercising ourselves to *godliness.* When we grow in our *devotion* and *reverence*, and in our *sacred awe*, we are taking proper exercise. *Godliness* is the “***attitude behind the actions.***” The deeper our reverence, awe and respect the more *godliness.* It was a lack of awe and respect that led to the death of Nadab and Abihu.

*And Moses said to Aaron, This is what the LORD spoke, saying: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified. So Aaron held his peace. Lev 10:3*

A lack of reverence and awe, made it easy for them to add to God’s instructions. Those with a truly godly heart regard Him as too holy to do such a thing. They don’t want to be ashamed. Being diligent in doing exactly what He has revealed is also a godly exercise.

This is what brings deep and heartfelt repentance. Any failure leads us to run to Him with tears of repentance and sorrow. Sorrow because we disappointed Him. The *godly* are keenly aware of His

watchful eye. It affects every activity of their life. This gives excitement, success and anticipation to every service. It is like the child who wants to do his best when his parents are watching him play sports. They know God is watching and with all their might they seek to honor, praise, and glorify their Creator who made them and gave them every joy in their life. We should relish the grace of God that brought salvation and *godliness* to us. So we deny ungodliness and live *godly*.

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, **denying ungodliness** and worldly lusts, **we should live** soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Titus 2:11-13*

## **Brotherly Kindness**

With God as our Father and all who obey the gospel becoming the children of God, there has to be some tie between all those who become God's children. God wants those in the church to see themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ.

*But as many as received Him, to them **He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:** Jn. 1:12*

*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, **that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7** Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Gal. 4:4-5*

*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but **you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."** 16 **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs** — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:15-17*

As the nature of this relationship grows, the feelings should be growing with it. This is not the first time Peter has spoken of this in his letters.

*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere **love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,** 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 1Pet. 1:22-23*

*Honor all people. **Love the brotherhood.** Fear God. Honor the king. 1Pet. 2:17*

*Finally, all of you be of one mind, **having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;** 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 1Pet. 3:8-10*

*But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. 8 And **above all things have fervent love for one another,** for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 9 **Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.** 1Pet 4:7-9.*

*Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by **your brotherhood** in the world. 1Pet. 5:9*

We need to develop an awareness of these truths and begin working on the appropriate emotions that should be felt. One of the ways that God has helped us in this is our tie to Abraham. The family relationship we all share in the church began with Abraham. God had promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations. God performs a power similar to the birth of Isaac when we are baptized. We become Abraham's seed. Children of promise, just like Isaac!

*For **as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.** ... 29 **And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.** Gal. 3:27, 29*

*Therefore know that **only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.** Gal. 3:7*

*Now **we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.** Gal. 4:28*

*For **they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham;** but, "**In Isaac your seed shall be called.**" 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but **the children of the promise are counted as the seed.** Rom. 9:6-9*

That Abraham is our father and Sarah is our mother is a truth emphasized again and again in the Scriptures.

*1 What then shall we say that **Abraham our father** has found according to the flesh? ... 11 that **he might be the father of all those who believe**, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and **the father of circumcision** to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which **our father Abraham** had while still uncircumcised. .... 16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure **to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all** Rom. 4:1, 11-12, 16-17*

*as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, **whose daughters you are** if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. 1Pet. 3:6*

With this background, we have two important reasons to add brotherly kindness to our faith. First because we are all children of Abraham. Just as Israel was a brotherhood, we have been grafted in and now possess the same benefits. The Old Testament is now our history, the fathers in Israel are now our fathers. Most importantly, Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brethren.

*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, **in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings**. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason **He is not ashamed to call them brethren**, 2:12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." Heb. 2:10-12*

Everyone who is born again is adopted into the family of God. As each of us becomes God's children, we also become God's family. All who obey the gospel and accept Jesus as the Son of God are in the family of God. While many have said that we should love the members of the church as we do the members of our own family. Yet there are obstacles. Many Christians were not raised in the "perfect" home God designed. They do not all fully possess the feelings they should have. But whether it is 'natural affection' from our upbringing, being transformed by the renewing our mind (Rom. 12:1-3) they are the foundation upon which "brotherly love" or "brotherly kindness" rests.

*"philadelphia... **the love of brothers (or sisters), brotherly love**... In the N. T. **the love which Christians cherish for each other as "brethren"...**" (Thayer, p. 653; 5360)*

*"philadelphia... brotherly love *philadelphos* (NT:5361) loving one's brother, brotherly ... The noun occurs 6 times in the NT, the adj. once (1 Peter 3:8). **A significant shift in meaning has occurred over against secular Greek. In the latter the word group always refers to "love of one's brother [or sibling]" in the literal sense ... In contrast, the NT uses the terms only figuratively to refer ... to brotherly love between Christians united through their common status as children of God** (Exegetical Dictionary NT:5360)*

As is clear from the definitions, brotherly kindness comes from the Greek term *philadelphia*, a compound word made up of *love* and *brother*. By using it, God expected us to bring all the emotions and qualities of the family into the church. In revealing the work of Jesus in redemption and salvation, God used the family to help explain the fullness of what Jesus did.

The foundation of *brotherly kindness* centers on these facts. We are all children of God, the seed of Abraham, and the children of promise. Jesus is our brother, God is our Father and we are all brothers and sisters in Christ making up the brotherhood. These are not simple doctrinal truths to believe. They are the foundation of our spiritual family relationship, which can bring great blessings. It can bring a sanctifying influence like the holy oil that sanctified Aaron, and like the dew and rain that comes down upon the soil and brings great blessings.

*Behold, **how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!** It is like the **precious oil upon the head**, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. 3 It is like the **dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing — Life forevermore.** Ps 133:1-3*

Until we begin to add "*brotherly kindness/love/affection*" none of this will happen. What God made by grace, we must believe and put forth every effort to make a reality in each local church. This is what we do to add *brotherly kindness*. As we understand these truths, the same *brotherly kindness* we had in our fleshly family will naturally form in our heart for those in our spiritual family.

**Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ... 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Rom. 12:10,13**

**But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; 1Th. 4:9-10**

**Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. 3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them-- those who are mistreated-- since you yourselves are in the body also. Heb. 13:1-3**

By having the same mind and feeling compassion for one another, the church is prepared to love as brethren. This is accomplished when everyone in the church feels tenderhearted toward one another, all are courteous and kind, and no one seeks to repay the slights and disappointments that sometimes come.

Any strong family is based on the commitment of the husband and wife to love each other and each child through all the adversities of life. So also each local church is strengthened by the commitment of all her members to let *brotherly kindness* reign in the church.

*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.*

*Before our Father's throne We pour our ardent prayers; Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, Our comforts and our cares.*

*We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear; And often for each other flows, the sympathizing tear.*

*When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain, but we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again*

## **Love**

Peter's last word is both the bond of perfection and the greatest of all the thing that as Christian can strive to attain. It is different from the other six. They are specific qualities, with a beginning and an end. Love has neither. Love is the biggest thing in the Bible and may actually be bigger than the Bible. There are several reasons why we are forced to conclude this. First, love encompasses the entire Old Covenant Scriptures.

**Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? 37 And He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets. Mt. 22:36-40**

Love is big enough to enfold every command in the Old Covenant. All that was written in the Law and the Prophets "depend/hang/suspend" from it. We can sum up the entire Old Testament under the commands to love God and love our neighbor. Love is also greater than faith and hope.

But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but **the greatest of these is love,**" 1Cor. 13:13

Love is the bond of perfection that binds all the other tender emotions into a perfect unity. All that is wholesome and good in our character is bound and held together with love.

**Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. Col. 3:12-15**

But what makes love bigger than all these things is the truth that God is love, and that if we do not love, we cannot know God.

**Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1Jn. 4:8)**

For the Holy Spirit to elevate love to a position this high reveals its greatness and immensity. Love is from God! Those who love are born of God and know God. Since there is no other source for love, we must first be born of Him before we too can love. Those who do not love do not know God

because God is *love*! It is difficult to wrap our minds around this concept. It is simply too big.

Yet our attempt to fully understand and know this *love* is doomed to failure because it truly is beyond our comprehension! No matter how much we know about *love*, it is still just a tiny portion of all that is involved in it. So we simply have to struggle and strive to the best of our ability.

*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God. Eph. 3:17-19*

There is something very special about this *love*! Those who set their hearts to acquire it enter the path leading to all the fulness of God! Since God is *love*, the more *love* we have, the better we will understand Him and the more like Him we become. We must root and ground ourselves in this *love*, seek to know it's breadth, length, height and depth. Searching for the elusive understanding of the fullest depths of the *love* of Christ, even though it surpasses knowledge!

It was the *love* and devotion of Jesus Christ, both to God and man that illustrated its fullness. The selfishness of sinful man, with our marred spiritual image could never comprehend the sacrifices true unselfish devotion and concern for others will do. It was Jesus' *love* that brought Him from heaven, caused Him to agonize in the garden and writhe in pain on the cross. These acts of loving sacrifice gave God the means to give us a "new" commandment:

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Jn. 13:34-35*

What does Jesus mean when He reveals this command as being new? This word is only used for things that are unused or fresh. Things that are recently made.

*"kainos... new, i.e. a. as respects form; recently made, fresh, recent, unused, unworn..." (Thayer, p. 317; 2537)*

Jesus gave a brand new command. One never given before because it could not have been given before Jesus came. Before Jesus revealed *agape-love*, God was limited on how He could ask us for love. He could command man to *love* Him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. He could command us to *love* our neighbor as ourselves. But both of these are very limited for they are subjective commands. Whatever we can comprehend as love is the highest standard available. In these commands man compares his *love* for God with his own strength, mind, heart and soul and his *love* for others with his *love* for himself. Jesus "new" command is different. God can now command us to *love* "even as" Jesus loved us.

*"kathos,... 2. according as i.e. in proportion as, in the degree..." (Thayer, p. 314; 2531).*

Although we cannot fully comprehend it, we can now use an objective standard outside ourselves. The *love* God wants us to add to our faith must be in proportion to Jesus' *love*. As we grow to understand the *love* of Christ, we can begin practicing it's fullness and depth. This is also why we need knowledge and discernment to practice *love* properly. We just can't figure out love without precise and exact directions.

*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, Phil. 1:9*

Without a precise and correct knowledge, joined with the wisdom to see things clearly (discernment) it is impossible for this *love* to grow and abound. There is a great deal more to it than man in his natural state can comprehend. This *love* rises far above any of the notions and understandings that exist in this world! Without this knowledge we can only *love* others as we *love* ourselves and we can only *love* God with our heart, soul, and mind! But we cannot *love* "even as" He did.

English speaking Christians have an additional hurdle to cross in our path to a full mastery of *love*. English gives us only one word for *love* in all its forms. Jesus could choose from four Greek terms. *philos* (affectionate *love*), *storge* (family *love*), *eros* (sensual *love*) [Jesus had no use for this selfish and vile term and His apostles also never used it.], and *agape/agapao* (a new term elastic

enough to be used to contain all the new things Jesus wanted it to reveal and develop).

When we read “love” in the NT we must learn to separate, either by context or by word definition which of these ideas is meant. Though *eros* is not used in the NT, *storge*, *philos* and *agape* are. Each has its own specific meaning and was selected by the Spirit to reveal the meaning behind the term. *agape love* is a very different *love* than the others. It is *agape-love* God asked us to add to our faith. *agape*, rises far above *storge* (family affection), and *philos* (personal interest and enjoyment). It is a pure spiritual ideal rising above the others. Even the original use of *agape* only offered a shadow of what God forged it to mean in Scripture.

“*agape*,...a purely bibl. and eccl. word... *affection, good-will, love, benevolence*:.. (Thayer, p. 4-5; 26)

*agape/agapao* is a purely biblical and ecclesiastical word! This means it has little history outside the Bible. Its definition is based entirely on how the Spirit used it in the NT Scriptures.

“*agapao* and the corresponding noun *agape*... present “the characteristic word of Christianity, and since the Spirit of revelation has used it to express ideas previously unknown, enquiry into its use, whether in Greek literature or in the Septuagint, throws but little light upon its distinctive meaning in the N.T... (Vine Vol. 3 p. 20-21)

Basically, there are three expressions for love in pre-biblical Greek: *eran*, *philein*, and *agapan*. 1. *eran* is passionate love which desires the other for itself. In every age the Greeks sang glowing hymns to sensually joyous and daemonic *eros* ... *philein/philia* on the contrary, signifies for the most part the inclination or solicitous love of gods for men, or friends for friends. ... In the word *agapan* the Greek finds nothing of the power or magic of *eran* and little of the warmth of *philein*. Its etymology is uncertain, and its meaning weak and variable. Often it means no more than “to be satisfied with something... But whereas *eros* consistently engages the thinking of poets and philosophers from Homer to Plotinus, *agapan* hardly ever emerges as a subject of radical deliberation. It is indeed striking that the substantive *agape* is almost completely lacking in pre-biblical Greek... a love that does not desire but gives. ...” . (Kittel TDWNT; 26)

What these scholars are telling us is that Greeks, like most of humanity treasured the selfish misuse of others for their own pleasure more than the sacrifice of self in order to please others. *eros/eran* gave them the right to indulge in whatever pleasures they desired regardless of the cost to others. This captivated the minds of the poets and the worldly. Even *phileo/philia* centered primarily on man’s pleasure. When Greeks loved something with *phileo/philia* whether it be a hobby, a job, a car or even a wife, they meant that it gave them pleasure and enjoyment. The moment it stopped giving them pleasure they no longer loved it and it could and often was discarded. The magical intensity of *eros* and the warmth and fulfillment of *phileo/philia* captivated them.

But there was none of this is *agape*. It didn’t really even have a meaning to them for its use is “weak and variable” and hardly used at all. The “*substantive agape is almost completely lacking in pre-biblical Greek.*”

Jesus took *agape*, dusted it off, and used it to describe the greatest single quality Christianity offered! Greater than faith and the bond of perfection, it is used over 250 times in the NT. The Holy Spirit found great uses for it. A lifetime of effort and toil must be put forth to grasp its vast height, depth, length and breadth! For it is not of this world!

Its first use in John manifested its wonderful power and might. It was the force behind God’s sending Jesus to save the world.

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Jn. 3:16*

God wrote this to help us see His own attitude and feeling toward fallen man. Though it took the gift of His own Son’s life to redeem us, God’s *agape* did it. This is the demonstration of His love:

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Rom. 5:8,10*

God’s *love* made great sacrifices for man’s needs, even for those who would never appreciate or use it. This is the essence of *agape love*. It considers only the needs and well being of others, not

what might be gained in return. It makes great sacrifices for the needs of those with nothing to give in return! Even those who are trying to harm or hurt.

*You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.... 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. Mt. 5:43-45, 48*

If we are adding God's great *agape* love to our faith, then we must rise above the selfish notions of this world. Such a *love* must reach out to the entire human race, and be willing to sacrifice to the degree that Jesus did on the cross. If we seek the perfection of our Heavenly Father, our *love* must grow to be "even as" that of His only begotten Son. This is what we are adding to our faith.

*31 And yet I show you a more excellent way. 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails. 1Cor. 12:31-13:1-8*

<i>Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;</i>	<i>does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. <u>1Cor. 13:4-8</u></i>
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This is God's definition of love. It is how He feels about us, how He wants us to feel about Him and how He wants us to treat one another. It gives us the scope of what Jesus had in mind when He commanded His disciples to love one another as He had loved them. Loving to the same degree and in the same manner as Jesus requires all the above. First we learn the meaning of each term and phrase. Then after we memorize and understand what God's expectations are, we begin to master them. But all efforts put forth offer God's greatest blessings. Love makes us like Him, and those who truly love will enhance the church they attend. They will be a blessing to their friends and to their families. Those under it's power are meet for the Master's use.

Love is unselfish devotion. It is the broadening of our circle of concern to an ever widening group. The qualities listed above are the proof we have it.