

In this work, *Nonviolent Followers of Jesus: The Golden Thread*, we are looking deeply at what Jesus meant when He talked about Love.

We know each of us has a deep desire for love. We sometimes feel such a powerful desire for love that we realize we want everyone to experience love: those who have died, those who live far away, those who don't have enough food or clean water. We want love for all people of all times and all places.

Sometimes we are aware of a desire inside ourselves that even people who do bad things or who treat us badly feel loved. Sometimes we might feel as if there is no one else who could possibly feel a desire for love to be experienced by those hurtful people. It is not often in the big wide world that we hear about love given to "bad" or hurtful people. But sometimes, deep inside ourselves, most of us know that what those people need—what we want to give, what we have in our hearts but might not be allowed to show—is love. We want love for everyone, especially those "difficult to love" people.

We are not alone in our deep desire for love for all. In fact, that kind of love is part of being a human being—even if it is deep inside our hearts and minds.

When God made human beings God made us like God—capable of understanding and capable of love. Jesus came to show us more precisely, more exactly, how to live that love than what any human being had been able to do before Him.

So, the Gospel, the story of Jesus' life and teaching, is Good News for everyone. The Gospel shows us how to live so that the deep desire inside ourselves can grow strong and flourish. The Gospel shows us how to live so that our deep desire for Holy Love is fulfilled. We don't have to pretend the desire is not in our hearts—it is in our hearts and it is part of being human.

Jesus' Way of Love brings Love to everyone. Jesus' Way of Love leads to Love filling all things. Love from God to Jesus through the apostles and disciples who lived nonviolently heals sadness and pain and sorrow. Jesus' Way of Nonviolent Love brings Parousia—God filling everything.

But, Jesus' Way of Love is a very particular way of loving. It is NOT always easy, or fun, or rewarding.

In our language, English, we use one word—Love—to mean different kinds of experiences. Most of us “love” cookies. But we don’t “love” cookies in the same way that we “love” our moms and dads.

The New Testament was written in the language called Greek. Greek has several different words for the English word “love”. The word for love that Jesus used, and that His followers experienced Jesus living, is the word Agape ( ah guh pay).

All the writers of the New Testament had the same particular understanding about what Jesus meant when Jesus used the word LOVE. Living this kind of Love is the work of the Christian.

Agape has three parts which must be thought about separately.

First, Agape is kindness towards another person which is freely given and doesn't want anything back from the person who received the kindness.

The important words here are **KINDNESS, FREELY GIVEN, and DOESN'T WANT ANYTHING BACK.**

Kindness, the willingness to serve, can be shown in three ways—by thoughts, words or deeds. Kindness, care, compassion, mercy, or love in some form, is sent out towards the one in need of that kindness.

Perhaps it is a prayer for someone we see but can't actually talk to—like a child crying in a car seat when we are driving by in traffic.

Perhaps it is a small sentence which comes from our heart that we can say to someone who is in pain. “I hope you feel better soon.” Or it is the kindness of courage—speaking the truth about a hurtful behavior of someone who is not easy to talk to.

Perhaps kindness or care is an action directly given such as being friendly towards with someone who is alone.

Most of us know what kindness and care are.

‘Freely given’ means that no one forced the thought, words or action of kindness to happen. Real Love cannot be forced or commanded. Here we realize that actions and words can seem like love but might not have real love behind them. Also, very small deeds might be done with great, life-changing love.

(Most of us have had adults tell us to say comforting words or offer help to someone in need whether we wanted to comfort that person or not. Perhaps this happens as a way to help us learn to be comforting, to teach us that comforting others is important. Even so, most of us know when we are thinking, speaking or doing something with genuine love.)

Agape is so genuine, so real, so free that the person doing the deed of love doesn't even care about being thanked, or known, or noticed. Love or care is freely given; it is happening just because someone needs to receive that love or care.



The second part of Agape is being WILLING TO SACRIFICE or suffer or accept some difficulty without wanting to RETALIATE or get even with, or back at the person involved in the reason for the suffering.

Just as we said earlier, this love is freely undertaken. No one was forced to get this love started. Love cannot be forced.

‘Sacrifice’ means to offer up or give up something, especially something you don’t really want to give up. Suffering is some sort of pain and pain is unpleasant—it hurts in some way. No one wants suffering.

Not to retaliate means we don’t give back something of the pain that we experienced. We don’t act with violence in our words or actions or even our thoughts.

Sometimes loving another person requires that some sort of pain or offer of time and energy be accepted by the one who desires to love. With this love there are not bad feelings towards the one who needed our help, time, energy, or our care.

The one willing to make this offer or accept this pain is living Agape as Jesus did.

The third part of Agape is being willing to RECONCILE (reconcile means to settle the problem, to become friends again) WITHOUT having any part of DOMINATING (to have power over) the one you have forgiven.

The willingness to reconcile means more than that there is no anger or holding on to the bad feelings that come with being hurt. Willingness to reconcile means we are friends again, talking together and getting along again. Because the letting-go of any bad feelings (if bad feelings were even there) is freely done, love and relationship is completely restored; there is not the thought or desire to remind the other of the reason for the need of reconciliation. The ones who reconcile never want the others involved to feel bad. The ones who reconcile never let the others involved worry that the reconciliation might not be complete, perfect and final—because the friendship is returned to complete health.

Three very simple examples might help our understanding of the three parts of Agape.

You are walking down the street and you see a child trip and fall. You walk quickly to the child and help the child feel better. Perhaps you tie the shoelaces which caused the fall. After the child is comforted the child walks away. You were so happy to help the child you did not even notice that the child didn't thank you for your help.

Or, maybe you didn't even feel happy when you helped the child. Maybe you quickly comforted the child, tied the laces and the child ran off while you got right back to your walk. Sometimes feeling happy is like a reward we get from helping.

But sometimes that feeling isn't present even though deeds of love are present.

Agape is serving another without any desire to receive anything back. Agape is doing the deeds of love that are necessary in caring for another child of God. In this simple story the child needed comfort and help tying the laces and you gave that help.

Let's change the situation a little bit to help us think deeper about the second part of Agape: the willingness to suffer, if necessary, without the desire to hurt back.

You are at the playground waiting for your turn on the swing, your favorite activity. You see a child trip and fall. You move away from the swings to help the child. You comfort the child and tie the laces which caused the fall. Perhaps you make the child laugh a little. The child runs off to his family and you turn towards the swings. You notice the family at the swings is just leaving and another family steps right up to get on the swings. Now you've missed your chance to swing; it's getting too dark to wait for another chance. You have to go home without swinging.

Agape love means you don't even think a hurtful thought towards the child who received help from you which caused you to miss the fun you looked forward to enjoying. And you don't feel anything hurtful towards the family on the swings either.

Here is a simple example of reconciling without dominating.

Your neighbor comes over to ask your sister to go to the park with her family. You tell the neighbor that your sister is taking a nap but that you could go instead. So you go to the park and really enjoy the outing with the neighbor's family.

At your family's supper table everyone talks about what they did during the day. You say that you enjoyed a trip to the park with the neighbors. Your sister says that she was reading in her bedroom, not napping, while you were at the park—the outing to which she was invited. And she tells you she is glad you enjoyed your time with the neighbor's family. Now you know your sister is aware of the lie you told that kept her from going to the park. (This would be a good time to freely ask for forgiveness.) Whether you ask for forgiveness or not you and your sister are completely restored to the closeness you always have. You talk and giggle and have fun or work together for the evening just as you always do. Then each of you sleeps peacefully. The reconciliation is so complete, so pure, it is as if no problem happened at all. You know that this is the way you would want every reconciliation to be.

Agape is freely given, might include suffering, reconciles completely; it does not want to hurt, think badly of, remind the other of the situation or look down on the other person involved.

This is Agape. It is easy to understand and SOMETIMES it is easy to live.

Perhaps you are wondering why loving in this way is the work of those who follow Jesus.

Most of us are good people who are willing to help our family and friends feel loved, happy and safe. In fact, Jesus knew this and even told us, “Even sinners love those who love them.”

The Christian, the one who loves Jesus so much he or she wants to be like Jesus, remembers that God made all human beings. So the Christian loves all people.

The Christian loves even the enemy who hurts us.

Agape is the only kind of love that is capable of loving an enemy. The Christian puts a loving thought, word or deed in the place where a need or pain or a hurt or sadness or used to be.



In this way the Golden Thread of Jesus' Nonviolent Love is made visible. Nonviolent Love is magnified. Agape, Jesus' Way of loving, is the power and presence of God. Agape satisfies the desire in our hearts to love everyone. It is the power that heals everything. Agape is the way to achieve that time when there is no pain, no sorrow, no crying, no sadness. It is love for all, peace and joy for everyone, God filling all things forever—Parousia (I Cor. 15:28).

Thus, the Christian carries the dignity of one who has been called—called to be servant of Agape—that very particular kind of Love.

Agape, the Nonviolent Way, is the work of the Christian. It is the Golden Thread.

Print these pages on white paper.

Make these pages into an 8 1/2 in by 8 in.  
booklet with a red front and back cover.

Booklet covers are in a separate document.

Have the booklet bound.