

1. agape

impact

Consider this reflection on Ecclesiastes,

"We were not created to chase the wind...God is at work 24/7, all over our world, filling his followers with grace and mercy and power to reclaim and redeem and fix this broken planet. It's as if God has work gloves on. And he calls us to roll up our sleeves and join him with our talents, our money, our time, and our passion. He wants his mission to become ours."

Bill Hybels, The Volunteer Revolution

Life is too short and too precious to waste.

Do you want your life to have a lasting impact?

The needs around us are profound, the opportunities for doing good are great, the stakes are high, and not only when you consider our families, communities and nations, but also in light of eternity... each person's lifetime here is but a breath compared to the length of their existence.

And David served the purposes of God in his generation.

Acts 13:36

What are some needs you see around you? What are some opportunities for impact that you long to be involved in? Keep these in mind as we unpack the Why and the How of serving...

(fill out your response below)

biblical love = impact

Anyone can be ambitious, but it is not the same as an eternal impact for good.

When people talk about 'love,' they are usually referring to a feeling. But the bible has an entirely different category: love is a verb. The word in the original language sounds like this: "agape." This kind of love is freed from dependency on feelings. It's the kind of love God demonstrated for us when He died on the cross.

Can you think of a recent example of this kind of love -- taking action for the good of someone else in spite of how it feels?



not optional

Did you know that God's intention is that you would have an eternal impact? It's what He made us for (Eph 2:10). Whenever we make something, we have expectations. When it doesn't fulfill its intended purpose, we sense the injustice. As our Maker, it is natural and good for God to have expectations of us. And practicing agape-love fulfills every just requirement.

If we want to do good, it can be summed up in agape-love. Surprising as it may be, God says in James 2 that this type of love is actually not optional:

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For

whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

He requires every human to keep His law, and His law is love. If we don't, God has to give us the punishment we deserve, or else He isn't really good.

Every injustice we experience here on earth is a small picture of how our sin is an injustice to God. Can you think of an example when you experienced an injustice?



reveals our heart

Sometimes we don't want to obey or sometimes we're just too focused on other things. But this can be a warning, because if we aren't loving others and Him, we demonstrate that we don't actually know Him. In Matthew 7:21-23, Christ says

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Have you heard anyone justify their lack of service to God or others by saying their spirituality was just a personal thing? According to the Bible, what is the problem with that line of reasoning?

A large empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for a response to the question above.

2. danger

improvising

There's always a temptation to change God's holy standard to something more manageable. We don't usually do this consciously, but it happens all the time. The religious leaders when Christ walked the earth are a good example. They got in trouble with Jesus more often than anyone because they were good at keeping their own list of rules, but omitted the real requirements of God's just law of love. They were good at externals. But it's about more than externals (Matt 5).

As we think about engaging the opportunities and needs around us with agape-love, we don't want to make it another version of the gospel. Actually, any moral activity can be spiritually toxic if it is not for the right reasons.

When understood rightly, God's just law of love is neither a checklist, nor a recipe, nor a to-do list. It is an x-ray. No one gets an x-ray to actually fix the problem they have. It lets them see what the problem really is. Likewise, God's just law of love shows us our inability to be good enough to get to heaven in our own.

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin
Romans 3:20

How in your life have you treated God's just law of love like a checklist/recipe/to-do list, rather than like an x-ray?

turning from our good works

It's easy to think about the need to turn from obvious sin... stealing, abusing, betraying someone. And, although not as easy, it is still relatively intuitive to see the need to make this repentance in a holistic manner... and turn from the wrong inner motives like pride, hate, envy, and lust.

But there are other things that keep us from God that are not quite as easy to see: our 'goodness.' Isaiah the prophet was a man whose vocation involved using his tongue. But when he saw God's holiness, even he acknowledged "I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5a). Even his best was unclean.

If we don't see that our best moral efforts also need to be repented of, then we have not yet understood God's holiness. Sadly, then those moral efforts remain self-salvation strategies that keep us from relationship with God.

What is some 'goodness' that you are tempted to put moral confidence in?



3. why

the great news

So we see through God's just law of love that our sin deserves eternal separation from Him. To really grasp the reality of that is soul-crushing. But only then can we understand the great news of the gospel. If we go back to its roots, the word gospel literally means 'good news.'

Christ's death on the cross was like Him writing a check - in His blood - that paid for all our sins. Like any gift, it is not ours till we receive it. That is all it means to place our trust in Christ... we receive His gift of the payment for our sins on the cross, surrendering ourselves to Him.

If you were to stand in front of heaven and God were to ask, "Why should I let you in?" what would you say?



great motive

Once we have placed our faith in Christ, experiencing His unmerited love, we want to agape-love others in return. It is how we express our love to Him (John 13:12-17, 34-35, 14:15)

So we are no longer obeying for a position in His family, now we obey from a position of acceptance and forgiveness.

How would it feel if you knew that every hurtful, selfish thing had been completely paid for, and that God smiles every time He thinks of you?



4. how

Focus

So what does this kind of love look like? What is the focus?

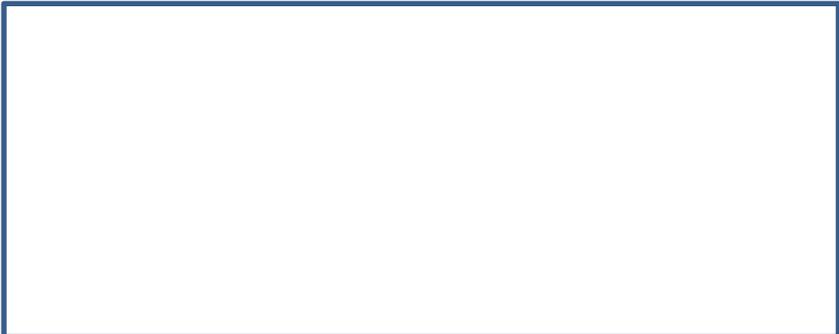
After Christ rose from the dead, and just before He ascended to heaven, He gave this commission to His followers in Matthew 28:

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

As we consider this commission and its reference to 'all that I have commanded you' we see that agape-love focuses on...

- both spiritual and physical needs
- both in and outside of our normal circle of relationships
- both fellow believers and outsiders

Reflect on the last one. What are some ways our agape-love, if focused on both groups, could improve our love of fellow Christ followers? our love for outsiders?



next steps!

At Christos, we try to provide more than one way for you to engage in agape-love. Here's how...

- Visit the map outside the sanctuary to see how Christos is engaged in serving. You might find that someone shares your interest or get a new idea of how you can pray.
- Join a Small Community within Christos since they try to exercise Seeing, Enjoying, and Sharing the beauty of Christ.
- If you're not part of a Small Community, there are opportunities on the Agape Well, a place on our website (christoscommunity.org/agape) where you can check out opportunities to serve and show love.
- Contact the Pastor for Spiritual Formation (jonathan@christoscommunity.org)

What next step might the Lord be leading you to take?



support

As you engage here at Christos, it is not our intention to 'throw' volunteers into the mix, but instead to view each serving role as a mini missions trip, with support before, during, and after. Even if it is only in a small way, this means we want to help you prepare, support you during the experience, and help you process afterwards. It's worth it to us, we get to:

"invite people to be used by God in ways they never imagined. We have the opportunity to empower them to

develop gifts they didn't know they had. We can cheer them on as they courageously assume new levels of Kingdom responsibility that fill their hearts to overflowing. And we get to see the look on their faces when they realize God has used them to touch another human being."

Bill Hybels, The Volunteer Revolution

As you serve, what kind of support could be meaningful for you?

___ Understanding of your unique gifts?

___ A clear purpose?

___ Understanding the philosophy behind the serving?

___ Relationships on a servant team?

___ An engaged leader?

___ Appreciation for your contribution?

___ Sensitivity to your workload?

___ A way to measure progress?

___ Some ownership & influence?

Let us know!

resources

christoscommunity.org

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Christos Community Church exists...

***To see, enjoy, and share the beauty of Christ in
cultural diversity.***