

Reciprocal Family Love | Family Love, Part 4

I. The Definition *Phileō*

- *Phileō* not restricted to families and close friends like *storgé* is. Anybody can have this love for anyone else — saved or unsaved, related or not.
- Regardless of the people involved, *phileō* is a companionable love. It speaks of affection, fondness, or liking between two or more people. In fact, *phileō* requires at least two people because it's a love that feeds the love in others.
- *Phileō* responds to kindness, appreciation, and love when it's offered by another. When you pour water from one cup into another, it naturally fills the other cup. The water level rises in the second cup because the first cup took the time to pour into it. And then the second cup pours that water back into the first and they keep feeding each other.
- But *phileō* can be sinful.
 - Jesus points this out to us in Matthew 6:5. He was teaching about prayer, and He said, “When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they **love** [*phileō*] to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.”
 - He shared a similar sentiment in Matthew 23:6. In that passage He was condemning the same group of people by saying they “*phileō* the place of honor at feasts.”
 - And Revelation 22:15 takes it even further when it refers to people who *phileō* and practice falsehood.
 - And it's *very* interesting to note that in Matthew 26:48, Judas said the guards would know who Jesus was because Judas would *phileō* Him. *Phileō* can mean simply “kiss.” No kiss was ever used in a more diabolical way than it was the night Judas betrayed God.
 - *Phileō* has a natural give and take about it. Unlike *eros*, *phileō* is cyclical, and that means it can be fed by any number of things. The Pharisees loved to pray in public because it was fed by the praise they received. They also liked the best seats at the feast because of the popularity and honor and prestige that was poured into them. There are many that love falsehood because of the perceived “benefit” that flowed into their lives when they lied.

II. Warnings Concerning *Phileō*

- We must not show others love simply so we can benefit from it. That's fake love. That's *eros*.
- Be careful that you keep high biblical expectations in your life and in other's lives so that you won't be tempted to *eros* and so you can help others be honest about their love.
 - *Phileō* grows when another invests in us. That means that *phileō* can grow even if *storgé* or *eros* is being poured into us.
 - *Storgé* is pure and beautiful, and it should call *phileō* from us and then call *phileō* from the other person. But *phileō* that grows from *eros* alone is tricky.
 - This happens in romantic relationships and between parents and children all the time. In romantic relationships, a young lady may be pouring true *phileō* into a boy who she believes is pouring *phileō* into her. But then, once married, she finds that his love was only ever *eros*.
 - But this also happens between parents and children. We foolishly expect our immature children to reciprocate our love. And when they don't invest *phileō* in equal portions to our own, we're surprised . . . and sometimes heartbroken. And — in a worst case scenario — we're in danger of our third warning.

- Just because you love someone doesn't mean they'll *phileō* you back. This has a significant implications — Don't be so certain that your love will right all wrongs. People are still free moral agents to do as they please.
 - I Corinthians 16:22 says, "*If anyone has no [phileō] for the Lord, let him be accursed.*"
 - The obvious understanding is that God has so abundantly poured love into us, anyone who would not reciprocate that love is not His child and will be accursed.
 - You'd think that if God Himself is pouring *phileō* into someone's life, they would have to reciprocate. But it's still a choice.
- If our love is merely *phileō*, and nothing else, it can gradually become strained and weakened when the other person stops pouring love into us — or doesn't reciprocate. Again, in a worst case scenario, it can collapse in a crisis.
 - Basically, when one cup stops pouring into the other, the second cup frequently stops pouring into the first.
- We must choose to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - In Romans 12, we were commanded to have *philostorgos*. This is a hybrid love that should exist naturally in all believers but that is not merely an instinct. It's designed to accomplish a purpose. It's designed to deepen and broaden love in others.
 - But if we don't choose this love, we're not only sinning against God, we're sinning against all those people He wanted us to encourage in their love.
- Don't think that the love that *phileō* pours into others is only ever hearts-and-rainbows-and-flowers.
 - In Revelation 3:19, Jesus says, "*Those whom I [phileō], I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*" We see two important truths here.
 - One is that *phileō* is prepared to do the uncomfortable thing. It's willing to reprove and discipline.
 - And two, while we see how the love of Jesus is being poured into us, that should draw out of us a *phileō* response — specifically zeal for right and repentance for wrong.

III. Ways to Increase *Phileō* in Your Home

- Make sure you *phileō* God first.
 - I Corinthians 16:22: "*If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.*" That's very straight forward, and I don't think any of you will be tempted to misunderstand it.
 - Matthew 10:37: "*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*"
- Don't *phileō* what doesn't matter.
 - John 12:25, "*Whoever [phileōs] his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*"
 - Revelation 22:15b talks about "*Everyone who [phileōs] and practices falsehood.*"
- Don't accept the *phileō* of the world.
 - John 15:19, "*If you were of the world, the world would [phileō] you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*"
- Accept every aspect of the *phileō* of God.
 - Revelation 3:19, "*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*"
- Don't settle for *phileō*.
 - John 21:15, "*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I [phileō] you.'*"