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By Jim Fowler

The Apostle John twice writes, “God is Love” (1 John 4:8,16). *God is pure and absolute Love.* The Greek word for God’s love is *agape*, as contrasted with other Greek words for love: *eros*, from which we get “erotic love;” *phileo* from which we get Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love; and *storge*, the natural familial love of father, mother and child.

God’s Love is unselfish and unconditional. God seeks the highest good of the other without any thought of reciprocation. God’s love is always outgoing, for He has no needs that require the affection of anyone other than himself. He is complete in Himself.

God is Love, and what God is only God is. It is not that God has a quantity of the affection of love that he desires to offer and dispense to others. God IS Love, and he is desirous of expressing his divine character of Love in and through human behavior. “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). Love is the first feature of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22).

We are unable to produce *agape* Love by human effort, for it is God’s character alone, and only he can express his character of love when he is present and indwelling us. “God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16).

Because God’s Love always seeks the highest good of the other, God created mankind and sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem fallen mankind in order to draw human beings into participation in the perfect loving community of his Trinity.

The Son of God, JESUS, is the revelation of God’s Love, the life-giving Spirit who brings God’s essential Loving character to reside in receptive hearts.

Unconditional Love

Natural human life is linear and conditional—if we don’t eat, sleep, or drink water the natural consequence will be death.

Unconditional love, however, is outside of the linear and conditional cause and effects of natural existence. Unconditional love goes against the grain of every natural thought and feeling of our humanity. It is not natural.

It will be impossible to love unconditionally:

- if you are resentful and still demanding an apology before reconciliation can occur.
- if you feel you have been wronged by another person and have failed to forgive them.
- if you feel like your actions or motives have been misunderstood, and you have not “ironed out” those feelings in conversation with the other person.
- if you still want to state or defend your position from a previous hurt, and haven’t laid it aside.
- if you are wallowing in the “poor me; I am wounded” victim mentality, and don’t want to climb out of that hole.
- if you are demanding that someone change their behavior before you feel

comfortable extending love to them.

Unconditional love is reaching out to seek the highest good of another with:

- no strings attached.
- no expectation that it will be easy or even lead to reconciliation.
- no expectation that the other person will admit their fault, or apologize, or even acknowledge what happened.
- no expectation of reciprocal extension of concern.
- no expectation that they will change their ways, even if they have committed a horrific crime against you.

Unconditional love is a choice—but it is more than a choice to act in a defined manner. Unconditional love is a choice to be the derived expressive agency of the divine, *agape Love of God in JESUS Christ*, regardless of circumstances or disappointments.

“The love of God has been poured out within in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us...” (Romans 5:5). □

Jim Fowler is the author of several theological works, including his classic, The Issue Is Jesus.