

God's ("Unconditional") Love: It's Moral, It's Conditional

By Stephen Gola

Is the "love" of God **conditional or unconditional**? It is BOTH, depending upon "relationship":

"Non-relationship love" is *unconditional*.

"Relationship love" is *conditional*.

1. God's "**non-relationship love**" is what unconditionally draws us as "sinners" to a holy God to receive the conditions of salvation — the new birth.

For God SO LOVED THE WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16.)

2. God's "**relationship love**" is what conditionally offers us as "His children" an intimate relationship with God through continual obedience to His voice and commandments.

He who HAS MY COMMANDMENTS AND KEEPS THEM, it is he who loves Me. And HE WHO LOVES ME will be loved by my father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. (John 14:21.)

For the most part in this teaching, we will deal with "relationship love" which is a "conditional love." Not understanding the difference between the two has caused great hardship and many lives to be hurt. The Lord has restored these truths to heal His people.

Four Kinds of Love

There are four kinds of "love" needed to make a marriage relationship complete. They are *AGAPE*, *PHILEO*, *STORGE*, and *EROS*. All are essential in a marriage. The highest form of these types of love is *agape*. *Agape* love is an unselfish committed love. It loves when all other types of love quit, and cares when there is no apparent reason to care. Agape is not an unconditional love but a conditional committed love. Jesus said, "*IF you love (agape) me you will KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS*" (John 14:15).

Phileo love is the kind of love that makes *agape* love enjoyable. *Phileo* love is having tender affection toward your mate. Most friendships are built on *phileo* love. *Phileo* love is that "something" that you see in another person that draws you to be their friend. It's one thing to unselfishly commit yourself to love (*agape*) someone who you do not like to be around because they irritate you. It's quite another thing to unselfishly commit yourself to love someone who is tenderly affectionate (*phileo*) toward you.

Another kind of love needed in a marriage is *storge*. *Storge* is a physical show of affection that results from a pure motive. It may be a hug, a kiss, or another expression of genuine affection. Because males are different than females, the wife usually needs this affectionate kind of love more from her husband than her husband needs from her.

Eros love is needed to make a marriage. *Eros* is the fulfillment of the physical sexual desire that a husband and wife show toward each other. The sex act has its greatest fulfillment when all the emotions of love and affection are its driving force. It's when "...*the two ...become ONE FLESH*" (Matthew 19:5).

Unconditional Love, Defined

In Christianity in general, we have been taught to "unconditionally" love—in this case, your spouse. The teaching of "unconditional" love implies that no matter how your spouse treats you, abuses you or corrupts you and your family, whether by legal or illegal means, you are to "love" them. Essentially, we have been taught that "unconditional" love is a love without moral boundaries.

The Meaning of Love

To understand the meaning of love we must first understand the fundamental character of love—the basis on which love is defined. Can love be unconditional? And is love able (or should it be able) to cover all actions and or behaviors without any corrective actions?

The universal definition of love is from Love Himself—God. We will see that love is moral if it is to be love at all. Within a wider sense of community, every human right (legal and social) is founded on the concept that love must be moral. Love, to be love, inherently has boundaries and standards. To love our fellow-man, morality obligates us to provide them with social and legal respect: protection from our immoral actions.

The Basis for Knowing We Are Loved

Therefore, to be LOVED by others logically implies that we are being respectfully treated with the same moral obligations by those who claim to love us. This is what Jesus meant when He said to "...*love your enemies...*" (Matthew 5:44): extend to those who mistreat you the same moral obligations as you would extend to someone you deeply love or respect. In other words, be just, be true and do righteous acts without respect of persons. To teach that love is unconditional destroys this truth.

When we understand that love is conditional it has liberating implications regarding the nature of Justice Himself, the nature of a just government and the nature of justice within the family. The Biblical definition of love is found in the understanding of who God is and knowing Him personally. Teaching that love is unconditional denies the truth that Love Himself is moral.

God, Love and Morality

"*If you love (agape) Me, you will keep my commandments.*" (John 14:15). The part of the Scripture that states "If you love Me" is the conditional part of us keeping God's covenant. Keeping the commandments—the conditions of the covenant, is our direct response back to God which displays that we do indeed love Him. Without the "keeping of the commandments" of the covenant, there is NO display of love back to God. Because "love" is the display of morality, justice and truth it is our gauge to recognize whether others love us and whether we love others.

Even though covenants and relationships are conditional, God commands for us to always extend love—to be moral, just and true to those who are not fulfilling their part of the covenant. The Scripture that states for us to “love your enemies” is NOT a command to “unconditionally” love our enemies, but rather, to morally love them unconditionally.

This means God’s love relationship with us is based upon moral absolutes. Therefore, we have those same moral absolutes in our relationships with others. Let’s take a look at these moral absolutes within the Ten Commandments.

The Duties of the Ten Commandments Give Us Protection

Let us review some of these Commandments to establish our right to be protected.

1. You shall not have other gods before Me: The commitment to put God first in any relationship means that God will never tell you that you are bound to a relationship where you cannot enjoy a moral lifestyle.
2. You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain: The commitment not to have a loose mouth but to guard the relationship. It is the obligation to have self control and the duty to control what comes out of our mouth.
3. Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy: The commitment to pull away from the week’s work and rest. It is a need and duty to enjoy rest and peace from the other six days of work. It is a time of togetherness.
4. Honor your father and mother: The commitment to honor our parents for God’s sake, not ours. It is the promise in keeping this duty that gives us a longer happier life on this earth.
5. You shall not murder: Commitment to control anger and to take proper moral action for restitution instead of taking matters into our own hands. It is the duty of the law to protect us, and our duty to protect others (See Romans 13).
6. You shall not commit adultery: The commitment not to violate marriage. It is our duty to remain faithful: emotionally and physically connected to our spouse.
7. You shall not steal: The commitment to work and save in order to purchase what we desire. It is the privilege to own and the protection from theft.
8. You shall not bear false witness: The commitment not to lie to get ahead or to look better than you actually are. It is our privilege to know the truth and to take action upon that truth known.
9. You shall not covet your neighbors stuff, wife, house, etc: A commitment to be content with where you are until you work your plan to get to where you want to be. You have a promise to prosper in all things.

In these commandments are the very promises to enjoy a fruitful life. The greatest commandment that God has given us is for us to walk in “love” (Matt 22:36-40). LOVE IS OUR MORAL FOUNDATION; not even God varies from it.

The Right of Protection is Founded in Knowing Who God is

Psalm 89:14 states: “Righteousness (righteous acts) and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face.”

Word Picture:

God is love (1 John 4:8), God is moral, God is just, and God does only righteous acts.

Love Himself sits upon a throne of authority.

His throne is positioned upon a foundation built of justice and righteousness.

This is WHO love is! He cannot vary in any way from being just, true and doing what is righteous.

This is WHY God cannot just “let things go—sweep them under the proverbial rug”—it is a legal thing. Because He is love, He is moral. Because He is moral, He is just. Because He is just, He always does righteous acts. Because this is who He is and we are made in His image, He gives us these same moral obligations through His commandments to guide our lives. This is the basis of a great relationship: whether that relationship is between man and man or God and man.

God loves everyone—sinner and saint alike! God who is Love: “demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Even though God is love, He is just, righteous and true. Because He is just, righteous and true, it becomes a legal matter which demands a right response. If we do not respond to God’s legal demands of justice we will not be legally “justified by His blood... (and)...saved from wrath...” (Romans 5:9). Therefore, we will endure the punishment of wrath because we have rejected righteousness, justice and truth.

Because God is love, He requires people to love, to be just, moral and true. Those who order their lives in the realm of hate, injustice, immorality with deceptions and lies will reap the penalty (or fruit) thereof. Those who order their lives in the realm of love, justice, morality and truth will reap the blessings (or fruit) thereof. Everybody is treated fairly—you reap exactly what you sow—no more, no less! Living a “holy” life is living out love, justice, righteousness and truth, simultaneously. This is what the Scriptures mean in 1 Peter 1:14-16: Be *“as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts (strong pressures of the flesh)...but... be holy for I am holy.”*

Love without morals is to live under tyranny—which is an abuse of authority.

Love has boundaries, love has morals, and love is conditional!

Committed Love, Defined

“Committed love” is vastly different than “unconditional love.” A person of committed love does not take things personally even though they have been personally attacked; rather, they purpose to understand the heart of the person of whom is their focus. A person of committed love has made the decision to develop their self in the character of Who they are: patience, joy, self control, kindness, goodness, endurance, gentleness, faithfulness and meekness. They use all means available to accomplish this: through self-discipline, prayer, the media, studying, reading the Bible and personal experience. A person of committed love has chosen to take the roll of helper rather than accuser in order to develop and to move toward

maturity those of whom it is committed to. Through their very character they tenderheartedly and purposely provoke those who should be showing love but are not. In essence, “unconditional love,” a love without conditions, is a lazy love. It overlooks rather than understands. It allows rather than safeguards.

Application to Marriage and Relationships

Marriage IS a lifetime commitment; however, it is not a lifetime commitment without conditions. When we are wrongly taught or erroneously told to be submissive to the immoralities of a spouse we are submitting to slavery and violating the First Commandment to not have any other gods before us. Because God is moral, He has commanded us to rule our lives by that same standard. These are our duties whereby we enjoy life; and have been commanded to extend those same duties to others. We are commanded to live within those freedoms in all situations of life.

When a man or woman attempts to live under the assumptive teaching that he or she must love their spouse unconditionally, they have no moral basis on which to request divorce for abandonment or continued adultery; they have no basis whereby they may leave a relationship because of physical and or psychological abuse. A marriage with no conditions is not a marriage.

This concept of “unconditional love” imprisons a person. It denies that a person has any human worth. When a spouse, parent, sister or brother is taught that they must love unconditionally, they have lost the Biblically-stated privilege to remove themselves from an evil environment or reject any behavior that is not consistent with Biblical teachings.

Because God’s love has been wrongly taught as being “unconditional,” it has stripped away justice for those who have had crimes done against them. For those seeking justice, many have been labeled as “unmerciful” and “vengeful.” The implication is that they cannot be genuinely walking the Christian walk if they will not “forgive” the criminal unconditionally—meaning not to pursue justice. To pursue justice is a God-ordained thing (see Romans 13). Remember, each time a person is told that God loves unconditionally, it implies (and is taught) that all are required to love unconditionally.

God loves because He is love. Because women are more emotional than men, some men say, “She is only acting that way because she is a woman.” A woman acts the way she is because she is a woman. Men act the way men act because they are men. Love acts the way He is because He is love. Though God is love, even in His mercy He never just “sweeps our sins and misgivings under the proverbial rug.” God forgives when we ask. However, He still requires that we always make the situation right. Forgiving someone does not mean they then continue as nothing happened. Rather, it gives them an open door to make things right.

All Rights Reserved, © Copyright 2006 by Stephen Gola

(All Scriptures taken from the King James Version Bible or the New King James version.)

***** ALL TEACHINGS MAY BE USED WITHOUT PERMISSION TO TEACH AND TRAIN GOD'S PEOPLE. PLEASE KEEP THE COPYRIGHT INTACT. *****

To download another copy of this teaching, Click http://www.divorcehope.com/pdf/love_its_moral_its_conditional.pdf.

Taking the Bride of Christ from being spotted to Spotless: Free (booklets, DVD or VHS movies or downloads) powerful God-Given teachings to the Church from: <http://www.TakeHisHeart.com>.
