

Leave / Forsake

(ἀφῆκες = 'ufikes')

To leave alone, forsake, abandon, to let go or give up, to disregard, neglect.

Revelation 2:4, "Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

Note, The word "left" (ἀφῆκες) can mean; 'to let go', 'to neglect', 'forsake', or 'leave alone' (abandon). The church at Ephesus had forgotten the most important aspect of a church. This may also mean they had bad attitudes - that they were once enthusiastic but are now apathetic. Yet more importantly, the love that they had for Christ, and for one another, had diminished. They had forsaken their first love. The Greek word ἀφῆκες can have a very strong meaning – to *abandon or disregard* as in abandoning a child. In this instance, we are told that **love** was *let go, left out, neglected, abandoned, disregarded*. It implies that love was severely disrespected! As we all know, love sometimes grows faint - and such was the situation at Ephesus. In the next verse the Lord encourages these believers to **repent**, and "**remember from where you have fallen**" (verse 5). The word "fallen" is interesting. It can denote a flower that has withered (*James 1:11; 1 Peter 1:24*), or a ship out of control (*Acts 27: 17,26*). Regardless of possessing any other admirable qualities, without **love** one gets withered and void of controlled direction.

The *deeds* the Ephesians did at first definitely involved forsaking everything else and devoting themselves strictly and exclusively to Jesus. In radical love for Him, they threw off everything else they had trusted in, or depended upon, and they abandoned themselves to their wonderful Saviour. And to Him alone! He became the great *love of their hearts* - even at great personal cost. In spite of this good track record, Jesus is calling the Ephesian church back to His **love**. He asks them to remember who they are and who He is - *to hold on to Him and to dwell in Him*. When we slip, it is gradual and we often do not notice. Sometimes, we do not care or see this as a problem, so we just grow faint. Therefore, to call us back, on occasion Jesus must threaten judgment. Unless we start running our lives as we have been called to do, there will be consequences. This is serious business! If an unloving church (or Christian) repents, they can be given another chance to serve and glorify Christ. If not, the lampstand (the anointing) is removed! And remember, anointing represents God's presence. Something any sensible person would avoid at all costs!

But what does it mean to have "left" or "abandoned," your first love? Firstly, notice that it is identified here as something that requires *repentance*. Secondly, this repentance must include doing the deeds you did at first. Remember, God defines **love** as the first and second greatest commandments. The "love" instructions we are given are so great that all the Law and all that the prophets wrote are summarised in these two compulsory rules of conduct (*Matthew 22:38-40, Romans 13:8, Galatians 5:14*). Firstly, **love God** with all your being. Secondly, **love your neighbour** as much as you love yourself. Love for God is most often defined in the Scriptures as "*if you love Me, you will keep my commandments.*" (*John 14:15, 2 John 1:6*) Love for our neighbours is most often defined in the Scriptures as something like, "*putting the needs of others ahead of our own desires*" (*Romans 12:10, Philippians 2:3*). So which **love** did the Ephesians leave behind, or neglect? Love for God or love for one another? Probably both!

Love

(ἀγαπάω = 'agapaho')

To love, to love dearly, to be well pleased with, to be contented with, to love deeply, unconditionally and constantly.

Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." Love has its perfect expression in the relationship between Christ and His church. In this verse, ἀγαπάω is used in reference to husbands (the masculine). This is interesting because the wife is not told to ἀγαπέ her husband but to "respect" him (verse 33). 1 Corinthians 11:7 states, "*For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.*" If the man is the glory of God, then the husband is the one who must take the initiative and "love" the way Christ loved.

Can see a principle unfolding here? The husband is expected to release the love of God, and the wife is required to respond to his love by respecting and honouring him. He shines his love onto her, and she then shines it back! She cannot receive his glory unless his glory has first radiated from him. Notice, the woman is a 'reflector' of the man's glory. And this is the same with regards his love.

Titus 2:4 says, "***That they (the older woman) may teach the young mothers to be sober, to love (φιλέω) their husbands, to love (φιλέω) their children.***" Here we see that the wife is taught by her mother to respond to her husband's love. The word φιλέω ('phileo') is to be distinguished from ἀγαπῶ ('agapaho') in this, that 'phileo' more than often represents "tender affection." Therefore, the wife's response to the husband's 'agape' is "tender affection" ('phileo'). In a marriage setting, 'agape' is masculine and 'phileo' is feminine. The husband ought to love ('agape') his wife as Jesus loves His church (His bride)! The husband should give of himself for his wife in everything - as Christ did for His Church! The husband should speak the Word of God over his wife to edify and encourage her. In response, the wife must respect, honour and admire her husband just as she respects, honours and admires Jesus her Saviour! And, by faith she ought to see her husband becoming a replica of Jesus. Only then can she get the husband she's believed God for.

As we've seen from the above exposition the word ἀγαπέ ('agape') has such a distinctive meaning that it is very difficult to find a general definition. Love can only be known by the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the wonderful gifts He has given to mankind – the gift of His Son and the gift of His Spirit. This special kind of love, that is completely unconditional, expresses the deep and constant affection God has towards unworthy people. *Agape*, is unique in that it's based entirely on the character of God, not on the worthiness or qualifications of the person at the receiving end. And it is certainly not based on the feelings one may or may not have when dispensing love. The feelings are optional, they may come and go, but the God kind of love is eternal, and will never change.