

Love and Knowledge

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And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment (Philippians 1:9).

Commentary

Here we have another one of Paul's prayers and another word for prayer, the third one he has used in these first nine verses. This is perhaps the most common and general word for prayer. But the point here is to tell the Philippians **that their love should be applied in the context of real or true knowledge.**

This is *knowledge* that is emphasized as to its "real" or "true" nature. Then, he says *love* requires *discernment* (a word used only here in the New Testament, stressing perception by the senses and the intellect). The word *love* is "agape" which is basically defined as giving (John 3:16; Luke 10: 25-37). So the giving love of the believer must be in the context of real true (we might say absolute, objective) knowledge, and being perceptive with an intellectually honest discernment. The Philippians' gifts to Paul were with this kind of love.



Observations

Two of the most difficult questions concerning giving are: (1) who do we give to and (2) how do we know that gift is actually helping. There are a few general observations we can make about the attitude of Christ and the Apostles concerning giving love:

1. It was never a social redistribution of wealth. It was usually a specific act of compassion aimed at a specific individual in need (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-32). **The closer you get to the person to whom you are giving, the more efficient your giving will be.**
2. It prioritized the needs of fellow believers. It was usually from believers to believers, not from believers to the world or from the world to believers (2 Corinthians 8–9). It was not that it was exclusively to believers. The primary reason for giving is not for the one you are giving to—giving reflects the heart of God, compassion pleases God. God doesn't need your money to take care of people.
3. Its value was primarily in the attitude of the giver, not the amount of the gift given (Mark 12:42-43).
4. There was never any consideration regarding the impact the gift would have on the world. Erasing world hunger, disease, or poverty was never a purpose for giving in the Bible.

Application

- Love always includes giving.
- Love should never be divorced from knowledge and discernment.