

# Tour 3 Themes

## Tour 3 Themes & Further Study

### Introduction

The third epoch of God's grand Meta-Narrative is the most amazing, mysterious, astonishing, and overwhelmingly beautiful of any we have yet had the opportunity to visit. It's the epoch of *Redemption*. As we walk through this epoch together, the Creator's unthinkable response to the catastrophe of the Fall will be revealed to us in a blinding flash. We will discover that this response flows from the very heart of God. In it we get our first real glimpse of the object of our Quest, the Crown Jewel of the Divine nature: *love*.

This love of God – denoted in the New Testament by the Greek word *agape* and in the Old by the Hebrew *chesed* – is something radically different from “love” as it is popularly understood in contemporary culture; so different, in fact, that some special effort is required to pin down its exact meaning. Accordingly, this Tour seeks to equip participants with a full and precise definition of *agape* love, the love that prompted the Father to send His Son into the world to *redeem* those caught in the backward flow of the River of Death. As we contemplate this love, time and time again we will be compelled to ask: “*Who is this God?*”

### Themes

Our starting point is the “crime scene” in the Garden of Eden. Standing on this spot, we will ask ourselves how God *might have, could have, or should have* responded to the waste and devastation He found there. We will wonder what it must have been like for the guilty “criminals” – Satan, Adam, and Eve – to stand face to face with the Author of life and realize the implications of the terrible choice they had made. We will weigh the options available to God at that moment of judgment and ponder the obvious question: in view of the mess that had been made, why didn't He simply destroy the world and start all over again? The answer, says Dr. Tackett, is that *He couldn't*. He *couldn't* because *that* response would have been completely inconsistent with the Crown Jewel at the heart of His nature: *the Crown Jewel of love*.

So how *did* God respond? Incredibly, He stayed His hand. He took a deep breath and instead of letting out a roar of *annihilation*, He breathed out a *promise* of grace. He made it clear to everyone concerned that, at the opportune moment, He would *send* Someone to *restore* the cosmos and make everything right again. He announced that there would be warfare between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the adversary. And, without specifying the details – all of which would be brought to light “in the fulness of time” – He declared that the Seed of the woman would not only be protected and preserved through many long ages of adversity, but would eventually prevail and “crush the serpent's head.” Though no one knew it at the time, this breathed-out promise was in fact the *Proto-Evangel* – the world's first articulation of the Good News of the Gospel.

This Good News is the embodiment of the *chesed/agape* love of God: the selfless love which, in the language of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, does not “seek its own” or “take into account a wrong suffered,” but rather “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things” for the sake

of another. Incredibly, God does not reserve this love exclusively for those who love Him in return, but extends it even to His direst enemies. Inspired by these and many other amazing scriptural statements on the subject, Dr. Tackett defines this *chesed/agape* love as “a sacrificial zeal that steadfastly seeks the shalom, or true good, of others, including hostile enemies who stand opposed to God and who are ‘dead in their trespasses and sins.’”

## Points to Watch For

In the 1828 edition of his *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster said that words and their meanings are matters of the utmost importance. Drawing upon the tenets of his Christian faith, Webster declared that God made the world and revealed Himself to the people in it by means of *words*. Words, says the apostle Peter in John 6:68, are the fount of eternal life. It’s not surprising, then, that our culture is currently locked in a battle over the meanings of words. *Love* is one of the most hotly contested of them all. If we don’t understand what this word denotes, we will have no idea what the Bible means when it tells us that “God is love.”

In this connection, one of the most glaring of the many cultural misconceptions dominating society today is the notion that love is something *soft*. Together with the great artist Leonardo Da Vinci, many of us tend to picture John, the apostle of love, as a somewhat effeminate figure. Such imagery is seriously misleading. Jesus referred to John and his brother James as “Sons of Thunder.” The implication is clear: real *agape* love is “not for wimps.” It requires strength, courage, and the power of God.

God wants us to understand that *love* is not a minor issue. It’s absolutely central to who He is and what He wants to accomplish through the lives of His people. This “sacrificial zeal” is the reason He *sent* His Son into the world to lay down His life on behalf of the lost and lonely – *the ultimate sending* of all time. Without it, everything we do is meaningless and we ourselves are nothing but “a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal” – a sound that quickly fades away to emptiness almost as soon as it floats out into the air. With it, we have everything we need to carry out the King’s Order and become His Redemptive Remnant of Hope in a dark and desperate world. No wonder hymn-writer Frederick M. Lehman extolled God’s love in such words as these:

Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade;  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.

(The Love of God, 1917)

## Questions for Discussion

1. Do you agree that God’s response to the Fall of man was “unthinkable”? Why or why not? Can you think of anything else He might have done to “redeem” the situation?

(It might appear “unthinkable” from the perspective of justice – i.e., Adam and Eve deserved to

be obliterated, along with the rest of creation, as “payback” for what they had done – or from the perspective of God’s power and might – i.e., it would have been simple, quick, and easy for Him to wipe the slate clean and start over again. But it was not “unthinkable” from the perspective of His relational nature. Relationship calls for solutions that place the needs of persons ahead of practical expediency. So does the agape love that sacrificially and steadfastly seeks the good of another.)

2. **Why does Dr. Tackett suggest that we may feel disappointed once we lay hold of the object of our Quest – the Crown Jewel of the nature of God? Why might this discovery fail to “buckle our knees” as we expected?**

(Love is the Crown Jewel in the nature of God, but, unfortunately, love is a word that has been sorely misused and misunderstood in our culture. In some respects we might even say that its true meaning has been “broken.” The common use of this word in sentences like, “I love this song,” or “I love that pair of jeans” has created a situation in which we simply don’t know what “love” means anymore. Sometimes it merely means that the “beloved” object enhances our “script” somehow.)

3. **The Truth Project led participants on a journey of exploration into the heart of God’s Truth. The Engagement Project is all about His Love. How are the two related? Why does Dr. Tackett say that they fit together “like hand in glove?”**

(Truth is the “hardness” at the core of agape love. Genuine love seeks the true good of another no matter what the cost. It resists the “easy way out” which only leads to greater suffering and hardship in the end. By the same token, Love is the relational context that makes Truth both meaningful and palatable. Love applies truth to real flesh-and-blood human beings in ways that take their best interests into account.)

4. **In one of the videos featured in this Tour a participant responds to the question “What is Love?” by saying, “Love is tolerance and acceptance.” Another replies, “It’s a verb and a constant decision.” What do you think of these two answers? How do they compare with the definition of agape provided by Dr. Tackett?**

(The first of these answers fails to strike an appropriate balance between truth and love. In modern western society, “tolerance and acceptance” generally imply an attitude of indifference toward the “ought” which is so essential to the well-being of the beloved. The second reply is far more compatible with our definition of agape as “a sacrificial zeal that steadfastly seeks the shalom, or true good, of others, including hostile enemies who stand opposed to God and who are ‘dead in their trespasses and sins.’” It indicates that love is something we do rather than something we merely feel.)

5. **How do you understand the apostle Paul’s assertion that God sent His Son into the world “in the fulness of time” (Galatians 4:4)? In what sense was the moment of Jesus’ birth a true kairos moment – an unparalleled opportune moment that might never be repeated?**

(There may be many different ways of answering this question, but the heart of the issue seems to be this: the Seed of the woman triumphed over the “seed” of Satan when God took on flesh and entered the world as Jesus Christ. That moment was the true “opportune moment.” Dr. Tackett calls this “the greatest sending of all time.” Once Jesus is on the scene, every moment is

an opportune moment – an opportunity for His followers to become a Remnant of Hope by living out the message of His love.)

**6. What is God showing you specifically through this tour?**