

What Is the Meaning of Hesed, God's Unconditional Love for Us?

[Jenna Brooke Carlson](#) | Contributing Writer

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The meaning of hesed is special and different than the type of love we see portrayed in the culture. Hesed demonstrates true commitment without strings attached. One type of love that exists is very conditional. “I love you because...” With hesed, the phrase should be switched. “Because God loves you...” God is committed to loving us. Nothing we say, think, or do can change that. Hesed is unconditional. Let’s take a deeper look at the meaning of this type of love.

What Is the Meaning of Hesed in the Bible?

Many biblical concepts are difficult to understand. For example, God is everywhere, omnipresent. It’s hard for a human brain to understand how God can be in Dallas and Dubai at the same time. Similarly, it’s difficult to grasp the full meaning of hesed in the Bible.

One reason for the difficulty is that there is [no direct translation](#) of the Hebrew word into Greek or English. Hesed originates from a word that means to bow one’s head toward another and signifies a covenant relationship. These details give us some clues to its meaning.

To help make sense of the concept, it’s necessary to combine the significance of words similar in meaning. [Christianity.com](#) states “Bible versions translate hesed with many different words such as love, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, mercy, devotion, and favor.” Phrases including love can also help up understand hesed including steadfast love and lovingkindness.

What Are Some Examples of Hased in the Bible?

Many verses contain the translation of *hased*, with over 250 occurrences in the Old Testament. The first instance is found in [Genesis 19:19](#). *“Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life...”* In this example, *hased* is translated to kindness, however, when we look at the verse in context, we can see why it can be so difficult to translate the meaning of the original word.

Kindness in English can be so simple: holding a door open, giving a compliment, or smiling at a neighbor. In [Genesis 19](#), the city of Sodom is being destroyed for its wicked ways. Angels urge Lot and his family to flee. When Lot remains frozen, the angels help his family escape, and then he says they “have shown great kindness.”

Helping a family flee from a city that is about to be rained down with sulfur is beyond the English definition of kind. The act is merciful and full of favor. The angels saved Lot from complete destruction. Instead of being destroyed, his family was protected and given a chance at a new life.

Another example of *hased* is found in the book of Esther. At the beginning of the story, King Xerxes grew embarrassed by his wife. Queen Vashi refused to parade around a banquet after seven days of free-flowing wine. King Xerxes and his advisors decided Vashi needed to go and a new queen would be ordained. The king sent notice to all of his 127 providences in search of a new wife. Esther was one of the many women brought forth. [Esther 2:9](#) says “She pleased him and won his favor.”

In this verse, *hased* is translated as favor. Out of all the women from the providences, Esther won King Xerxes’s affection. When people are favored they are approved of and supported. While the original Hebrew can be translated to *Hased*, we can see the meaning of King Xerxes’s favor is so much more. Because Esther was chosen as the new queen, she was able to save her people.

Many more examples of *hased* are found in [Scripture](#), especially in the [Psalms](#). The passages are full of people crying out to God, calling on his lovingkindness, his *Hased*. The authors celebrate his love as well as plead for his mercy. God is unchanging and committed to his people, surrounding them with all the aspects of his loving character.

Is Hased the Same Love as Agape?

Agape is [the highest form of love](#) found in the Bible. It’s the type of love Jesus demonstrated when he died on the cross for our sins. It’s unconditional and [sacrificial](#). The term demonstrates the perfect love God has for his people and is referenced heavily in the New Testament. To truly demonstrate agape love is beyond the ability of human nature.

On the other hand, hesed is used to explain both God and human love. As referenced above, many Psalmists use the Hebrew word to identify God's love, but the term is also displayed by others in scripture. This was demonstrated in the story of Esther when King Xerxes showed Hesed toward the future queen. Another example exists in the story of [Ruth and Boaz](#). After she stayed faithful to her mother-in-law, Boaz showed goodness and kindness to Ruth, becoming her kinsman-redeemer.

The two types of love have similarities and differences. Agape and hesed come freely from the giver and without stipulations. This type of devotion puts others first. Both words can also be used to describe God and his loving nature. The differences can be seen by looking at scripture in context. Agape is a broader term and focused on grace, while hesed is used in the contexts of covenants and concentrated on mercy.

4 Ways to Rejoice in God's Beautiful Hesed for Us

Share Hesed with Loved Ones

Whether you are in a marriage relationship or a caring friendship, stay committed to others. Shower loved ones with loving-kindness and goodness. This includes being truthful and trustworthy. It also means caring for one another's needs, even when it may be difficult. While maintaining boundaries, we need to display God's love to those he has put in our path.

Worship Our Loving God

While earthly love isn't perfect, God's love is, including his hesed. Worship can come in many forms including prayer, song, artistic expression, and so many others. Spend time thanking God for his unconditional Hesed in a journal or play worship music while cleaning the house. Connect to your God love language and praise him for his unconditional hesed.

Read Bible Stories about Hesed

When Jesus came to our earth, he shared many parables where he told stories to explain his teachings. There's a reason story is so powerful. We connect to people and their journeys, their lessons becoming clearer. When we read stories of Hesed love such as the ones found in Esther and Ruth, we learn more about God and grow closer to him. Carve out time to sit with your Bible and read his amazing love stories.

Study Scripture

With over 250 references to Hesed love in the Bible, there are many passages to study about this type of love. God reveals truth and wisdom to those who seek him. It's great to learn about God and his love through others' insights, but it's even better to read God's Word ourselves. When we spend time in Scripture, he reveals himself to us and we grow closer to him.

Hesed love is a high standard. Only God can demonstrate perfect hesed, but we can take aspects of this term and show them to others. In a culture heavily concentrated on situational love, we can bring all the beautiful qualities of hesed to our world.