

AGAPE LOVE; TAKE *THAT!*

Here's what to do when affection fails.



Agape love is such a luxurious opportunity to finally do something that cannot be refused. Rather than seeing this love as a challenge from God (“Oh, no, I have to love someone unconditionally!”), we ought to see it as one of the rarest gifts ever bestowed by our Creator—a gift that cannot be touched, tainted, or taken away. Rust cannot tarnish it

and not even moths with Jaws-like choppers can eat it. Agape love proceeds from us toward others, via God. It proceeds like a mountain river running pell-mell toward a valley. Nothing stops such a river. The flow is downhill and nothing *but* downhill. If anyone gets in the way of it, they've got a soaking coming whether they want one or not. Under they go. They can't help it. The flow is too powerful; the height and breadth of the water is too pervasive.

OUCH

The most painful experiences of my life have had to do with people I wanted to see, or be with, or bless, or talk to, but who I could not reach. These were people who, for whatever reason, cut themselves off from me. I could not reach them because they refused to be reached. Shunners employ several dastardly means of exercising their craft, some of which do not require physical distance. You can be in another's presence—standing face-to-face with them—and feel rejection. Maybe it is your offer of friendship that is shunned, or your words, or your logic, or your care, or your simple need for eye contact, a hug or a handshake. You reach out with a word, let's say, and it not only returns to you void, but leaves a dent in your forehead. *Ouch*.

Nothing hurts worse than suffering such indignity at the hands of intimates, and I do not except members of the body of Christ from this nefarious group. In fact, some of the worst offenders have claimed to be members of this esteemed body. This is not a pity party for Zender. I am using my own experiences to offer practical help to you in the human relations department. Agape love is a ready escape from the frustration of unrequited affection. It has been said that if you can't beat them, join them. I say, “If you aren't allowed to like them, then love them to death.”

AFFECTION

The language of Scripture, Greek-wise, knows of two different emotions that we commonly call “love.” The Greek word *phileo* is affection for someone based on that person’s loveliness or worthiness. The Concordant Dictionary defines it as, “responsive affection based on approval and regard, in contrast with *agape*, which finds its source in the subject, apart from any worthiness in its object.”¹

In John 11:3, Jesus was said to be fond of (*phileo*) Lazarus. But wait. Didn’t Jesus also love (*agape*) the brother of Martha and Mary? Sure He did. But He was also fond of him because of the man’s apparent loveliness. (Love and affection are sold separately.) On the other hand, Jesus loved Pontius Pilate, but was He fond of that unwashed Roman procurator? Hardly. As far as I know, Jesus and Pilate never went out together for a beer. Jesus loved the chiefs of the temple, but refused to send them Pharisee Appreciation Day cards.

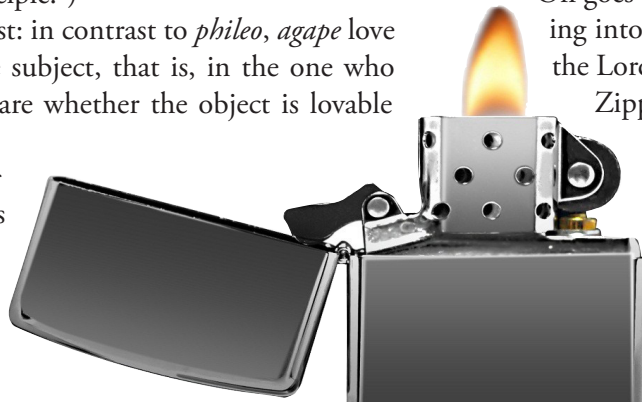
God loves the world (John 3:16), even though, on occasion, He may lack fondness for its inhabitants; think: *days of Noah*. In the days of that great patriarch, God drowned a gaggle of disagreeable people. (This very

“As far as I know, Jesus and Pilate never went out for a beer together.”

well may be the opposite of taking them out for beers.) Did God not love those full-time sinners of Noah’s day? Yes, He did. He’s God; He loves for a living. The flood was a non-fuzzy, non-warm judgment, yes, but it was also an ultimate mercy (“Guess what? I’m relieving you of your sinning tomorrow!”) and part of the ultimate reconciliation of that populace (“Welcome to the Great White Throne; here’s a towel. You are now acquainted with the contrast principle.”)

Speaking of contrast: in contrast to *phileo*, *agape* love finds its source in the subject, that is, in the one who loves, and it doesn’t care whether the object is lovable or not.

It loves because it *is* love. Because it does not depend on requital to function, such love is irrefusable. Now is when the fun starts.



“TAKE THAT!”

I hate it when I try to give someone a gift and they won’t take it. One of my best friends (I’ll call him “Jim Szabo,” because that’s his name) was going through a rough spell of unemployment several years back, and I tried to give him a hundred dollars. I said, “Here, take this hundred dollars.” Jim knew that I had no money to speak of, so he knew that this was a big sacrifice for me. I wanted it to be a sacrifice. I wanted it to be a “widow’s mite” kind of thing. Since it’s more blessed to give than to receive, I couldn’t wait to bless this guy, because blessing him would secure my own heavenly benediction. But that crazy Jim Szabo, he robbed me of all of this. He refused to take my money, but kept insisting on handing it back. This felt to me like being repeatedly slapped in the face. *What a numbnuts*, I thought. *Some people are just too proud to accept grace.*

LIGHT MY IRE

After that little experience I entertained the fantasy of carrying around a cigarette lighter every time I offered someone money. If they refused my gift, I would unsheathe my lighter, ignite the bills in front of the person (\$20, \$50, \$100, \$200—it didn’t matter to me; it was all God’s money) and say, “Well, since this is God’s money and He wanted you to have it but you won’t take it, I’ll just give it back to Him in the form of smoke.”

I have never gotten the opportunity to do this, but I assure you that I would do it. Such an impressive display would have nothing to do with me not needing the money, because of course I would need the money. It would have to do with me making the point that all money, all grace, and all affection belongs to God and He gives it to whom He will. Most people watching a “Benji²” toasted in their presence would try to stamp it out and say something like, “What a waste! Stop it! No!” I’ll tell you what a waste is. A waste is refusing God’s affection—or anyone’s affection.

Off goes the unreceived favor into the air, vanishing into the nether-sphere. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of my Zippo lighter.

AGGRESSIVE LOVE;
MMM, NICE

Now the fun. If someone like Jim Szabo refuses to be shown affection, you’re naturally insulted. You’re hurt.

¹ A third Greek word, *eros*, speaks of sexual love, but this word is not found in Scripture.

² That is, a one-hundred dollar bill.



"I prefer to employ the Martin Zender Refused Affection Revenge Tactic."

I speak now not of financial affection but of the emotional variety. It is painful to feel your grace rebuffed, your kindness stiff-armed, and your blessing blasted to bits.

Despair not, my friends. Relief is at hand. I urge you to employ my patented, easy-to-follow, Martin Zender Refused Affection Revenge Tactic: Take your anger, pain and aggression and channel it into *agape* love. I know it's unusual to see the words "anger," "pain," "aggression," and "love" in the same sentence, but I'm bringing you face-to-face with big-time revelation here. I shall soon acquaint you with why this is a Scriptural principle, but first consider these two common English phrases, "Kill them with kindness," and "Love them to death." Note the mix of aggression and love. Here is a potent cocktail, combining human emotion and godly regard. From whence does it come? Surprisingly, from Paul. The apostle writes in Romans 12:20-21—

If your enemy should be hungering, give him the morsel; if he should be thirsting, give him to drink, for in doing this you will be heaping embers of fire on his head. Be not conquered by evil; but conquer evil with good.

Aggression flows throughout this passage, though it is tweaked by the divine touch. Paul speaks here of an aggressive love that conquers, and of an exercise of good that combusts upon another's scalp. Having been rebuffed, *phileo* now puts all its primitive energy into a space-age new weapon: *agape*. The boiling pot of frustration remakes itself into beneficent purpose, via a divinely instituted channel: *agape*. God invented *agape* not only for the benefit of the receivers, but for those who dispense it as well. Here

is something that the dispensers can *do*. The dispensers need this, as they're all dressed up with affection but with no place to go. For the frustrated *phileo* person, loading the cannon with *agape* is fantastic relief.

THE OLD SAUL DESTROYED—BY *AGAPE*

Think of such love as a destroying torrent. I do love my cannon metaphor, but refer back to my river analogy on page 1. Such a torrent "destroys" with *agape*. The rush eventually breaks down all resistance. Affection, snubbed, says, "Oh yeah? You think you can refuse me? I'll 'see' your refusal of *phileo*, and I'll raise you *agape*." This is what happened with God and Saul/Paul on the road to Damascus. God tried to be nice to Saul his whole life (enviable nationality, great parents, best schools, sweet job) and it didn't work. So God said, "Okay, it's time to love the guy to death." *Agape* went forth and broke down Saul in the middle of the road. It "killed" the old Saul and created a new man. Hear this new man's testimony in 1 Timothy 1:14—

Yet the grace of our Lord overwhelms,
with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

SPECIAL DELIVERY

What is the best method of delivering *agape*? Many times, you can't just show up at someone's door; they won't answer. If you email someone with *agape*, they may simply refuse to double-click (one click on a Mac) your message. Want revenge? Here's how you get it: *Love the daylights out of the person when they're not around*. You send your love of this person to God, on that person's behalf. You say something like, "Lord, please deliver *agape* to so-and-so in one form or another. Enlighten them. Make something good happen for them. Bring them some relief." You may never get credit for this miracle until the great heavenly requital session opens shop and God exposes the intentions and distentions of all hearts. In the meantime, don't worry about it. You know the truth, and so does God. You've become a fellow-laborer with God in the dispensing of the most powerful force on Earth. Let it do its work—on them and on you. If you're trained in *agape*, the release of such power can and does feel better than the immediate rush of affection required. Plus, there's much reward to be had on your end of the equation.

Want to do more than simply pray? Then do what I'm doing now: write about it. Blog it. Record an audio



or a video blog. I do this all the time. This newsletter and my daily video shows are my therapy sessions. Perhaps your work will be read, heard, or seen by the intended recipient. If it never happens in this life, at least the exercise of this rare love will deliver you, personally, from the worst of your torments.

NIGHTTIME IS THE RIGHT TIME

You have heard me say that bedtime is the right time to bless your enemies. I still believe it. I pray for my enemies at night. In the shades of the moon, I ask God to make things well for those who either despise or reject me. I ask Him to somehow show them His love. My love goes to Him, then to them. God hears this kind of thing every time, and that's the joy of it for me. This is the deepest prayer one can pray. I may not like the objects of my love, but I nevertheless love the crap out of them. These are not Hallmark sentiments; this is *agape*. It's God's love.

Again, the humility required for such a prayer comes best, for me, at night. I'm so aware of God's tuned-in ear then. God probably says to some celestial bystanders, "Come here, quick! We've got one! This guy is praying for his enemies. He's wishing blessing upon those who really don't like him that much." The first thing the angels say is, "Who could possibly not like Zender?" Then they settle down, eat popcorn, and stare at the phenom-

enon through tear-filled eyes. No one adjusts the contrast or the volume of the presentation because no one wants to move. *Agape* is such a rare marvel, on Earth, in this eon.

As for me, I'm delivered of angst, pain, torment. God is on it. This love cannot, will not be refused. The timing is up to Him as to when the river hits and destroys the intended target. For me, it's the best medicine available, for in its wake comes restful sleep.

"TAKE *THIS*"

Jesus strained to show affection to His people, Israel. Most of them refused His *phileo*. Instead of going into a cave to sulk, He went to the cross. He took the energy and passion created by the refusal of *phileo*, raised it to *agape*, and won the day. He said, "You refuse to acknowledge and return My kindnesses. Very well—take *this*," and out came a love attack of unparalleled construct. Who could refuse the cross? It eventually "kills" everyone—with kindness. Jesus Christ mounted Calvary with no expectation of immediate return. He did it because He loved His people Israel, and He loved the world. No passive love, this. Rather, Jesus *strode*; He *stood*; He *bent*; he *knelt*; He *prayed*; He *limped*; He *cried*; He *died*. All of His earthly frustrations got poured into the wood of that cross. He would not be denied—and He won't be.

Neither will you be denied. Send out all the *agape* you've got, and it will not return to you void. —MZ



FROM THE MAIL

Martin, thank you for your bravery in proclaiming God's Truth. I know how tough it can be but as you well know, in all things our Lord Jesus Christ will sustain you. I want you to know that tonight my 18 year-old daughter and her boyfriend watched some of your videos and are excited beyond belief to hear God's Word being taught honestly and fully. By the way, "excited" means that they just had to wake me up to discuss how awesome they think you and your videos are. I will be buying your books and handing them out to the customers that come into my store. Funny thing is that none of the "Christian" bookstores here in Indianapolis sell them. Hmmmmm....I wonder why. Anyway if you can tell me the best way to get them that would be cool. God bless you.

<http://www.starkehartmann.com/Books.htm>



http://martinzender.com/crack_o_dawn/crack_o_dawn.htm

“May you be faithful to the end.”



Martin, I just read your newest ZWTF newsletter, Volume 4, Issue 37. I too have been challenged by Matthew 10:34-39 and the topics you address in your most recent edition.

May God be true and every man a liar. May He and He alone be worthy of all praise, honor and worship. His ways are past finding out; He alone is Sovereign and in control of ALL.

That's that. And there is no more.

He seems to be bringing the sword to your most cherished relationships—and to all of us who stand here at the end of the eon. Shall He indeed find faith?

Praise His Name. May you be faithful to the end. He will lead you, teach you and show you the way in which you should walk.

I trust Him with your life and with your vehement testimony to the good news—the REALLY good news.

We are but God's tools in the "game," players in the great Drama of the Eons.

Thank you for standing firm.

I praise our Father for your testimony of truth.

In His Name and For His Glory!