

Release *Agape* Love In Your Marriage

As I (Rick) was preparing for a men's retreat to help men have an experiential knowledge of Father, I was looking at **1 John 4:16** where it says, "*God is love.*" It's not that God has love, but that He is Love. Love is a person and Love is a substance that you can receive and give away! It's one of the most important parts of a healthy and vibrant marriage and the reason that we would all say is why we married our spouse. For Sue and I with over 44 years of marriage, we have probably said, "I love you" many thousands of times, and we never get tired of hearing it said again (especially when it's with real feelings and emotions)!!!

What struck me was that, since God is Love, He is all the types of love too. He is *agape* love; He is *eros* love; He is *phileo* love; He is *storge* love; and I like to add, He is *romantic love*. You can Google on any of those you're not familiar with, but I want to focus for a couple minutes on the first one, **agape love**. When I looked it up on line they said, "*Agape is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love, the highest of the four types of love in the Bible.*" Jimmy Evans defines agape love as "a permanent, self-sacrificing commitment to act in the best interest of the other person regardless of negative emotions or difficult circumstances." The best example of *agape* love is the way Jesus, as a son, interacted with the Father and what He did for us. Jesus said that *agape* love is what fulfills the Law. **Matt. 22:39**

In **Eph. 5:28** Paul admonishes husbands to "*agape*" their wives and their own bodies. Like everything in marriage, it works both ways and the wives need to "**agape**" their husbands too! To be truthful with you though, when Sue and I were dating and the first years of our marriage, I was not thinking about *agape* love so much as I was heavily leaning towards *eros* love! Hey, I am a man you know! I really didn't know what it even meant to "*agape*" Sue or even consider "self-less, sacrificial, or unconditional" love expressed towards her. I was too focused on myself and getting my own love needs met at her expense, and it negatively impacted our marriage relationship in a lot of ways. I needed love, but had none to give away.

It wasn't until I started to get my heart healed and began walking more like a son that I understood more about the Father's love. I began to learn about the love Father has for me and started experiencing His love inside me. Until then I did not have any love to give to Sue because you can't give away what you don't have yourself. This is not to say that we didn't have a good marriage and there were many times when we did genuinely experience love for each other. The healing process had begun when I was born again and later as we started to work on our marriage. We learned a lot of good things from the books and teachings we heard. As we applied the things we learned, they began to draw us closer together into a sweeter relationship.

Even with the big breakthrough of healing my heart and receiving the Father's love, I still was faced with the choice of changing my ways and to "*agape*" Sue. I remember a speaker who said that there are two stages of love. The first is what he called the "falling in love stage" which included dating and the first one or two years of marriage. Everything is new and exciting, full of love, emotions, and feelings that are running high. But after about two years this speaker said every marriage move into the second stage, "true love." As the emotions and feelings that carried you through those first years begin to decrease and the challenges of living together become more difficult, **love becomes a decision**. We must make the decision that I will love

you regardless of what you may say or do to me. However, if the marriage becomes abusive and your spouse does not want to get help, then you may have to “love/respect” your spouse from a distance or separation.

While I still agree that love has to be a decision, I have learned in the last year that there is an even better way to walk in love and “*agape*” your spouse. More and more I am moving towards a “*love-driven life*” where it no longer is a “have to” or even a “want to” because I want to please my heavenly Father. As His Love is becoming more real in my heart, I find myself being motivated by love to do the right things. It’s not that I do them just to be pleasing to my Father, but His love (God, who is love, inside me) is compelling me to do the things that will express His love towards Sue and others. Love is starting to compel me to keep the Law and His Word; Love compels me to love my neighbors and bless them; Love compels me to forgive and love even those who may have done something to hurt me; His *agape* love is changing my life!

So open your hearts to receive more of His Love and release more of His *agape* love into your life and marriage!

Since God is also *eros* love, I want to close with my Valentine Gift to you all!

The red rose speaks of passion, and
The white rose whispers of love.
Oh, the red rose is a falcon, and
The white rose a dove.
But I send you a white rose
with crimson on the petal tips.
For the love that is sweetest and purest
Has a kiss of passion on the lips!

Author anonymous

HAPPY VALENTINE’S DAY!