



Agapao Leadership

Bruce E. Winston, PhD

bwinston@regent.edu

And he [Jesus] answered, "You shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27, NASB). It is in this verse that we find the basis of leadership – to love God and to love your neighbor. The Greek that we translate in Luke 10:27 is *Agapao* which carries with it a sense of doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason, or in other words, loving someone like a friend. The word occurs 110 times in the New Testament, specifically for behavior between people. This article first focuses on the definition of *Agapao* and compares/contrasts it with *Phileo* and *Agape* in order to show why *Agapao* is suited as a base of leadership. The article then goes on to show how the concept of *Agapao* establishes the beliefs and principles of behavior that support 'good' leadership and shows the Beatitudes as the components of *Agapao*. While the New Testament Greek also presents *Eros* as a form of love, this erotic form of love is outside the scope of this article and is not addressed here.

Comparing Agapao with Phileo and Agape

There is no agreement on meaning of *Agapao* in that some writers/pastors such as Sopp (no date) imply that while *Phileo* is a love of mankind, *Agapao* is love from God, yet the use of *Agapao* in the bible implies that *Agapao* is more about people-to-people-love or friendly-love. To help see the focus on friendship-love note the use of *Agapao* in Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:43: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'

Matthew 5:44: "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you

Matthew 5:46: "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?

Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

McKay (1985) describes *Agapao* as having a higher meaning than *Phileo* (pg. 322) yet in John's Gospel (21:15-17) where *Agapao* and *Phileo* are used together it would seem that *Phileo* would have a higher meaning:

- John 21:15: So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love [Agapao] Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love [Phileo] You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."
- John 21:16: He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love [Agapao] Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love [Phileo] You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."
- John 21:17: He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love [Phileo] Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love [Phileo] Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love [Phileo] You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Jesus asks Simon if Simon loved Jesus like a friend and Simon escalated the relationship to that of a brother. Radic (no date) helps us understand the difference between *Agapao* and *Phileo* in that he defines *Agapao* as a love of reason and intellect whereas *Phileo* is a love of feelings. Since leadership should be about reason and intellect rather than emotional feelings leadership it is logical that leadership should be based on *Agapao*.

Seeking to find the basis for *Agapao* and *Agape* is complicated by the lack of agreement on the root basis of the terms. Neto, Mullet, Deschamps, Barros, Benvindo, Camino, Falconi, Kagibanga, and Machado, (2000) posit that *Agape* comes from a blending of the two Greek concepts *Eros* and *Storge*, which seems unlikely since the Definition of *Agape* is an "unselfish, all-giving love" according to Ryckman, Thornton, Gold, and Burckle (2002) (p. 519), which is in contrast to *Eros* as Ryckman, Thornton, Gold and Burckle define as physical and passionate love. Of interest, Ryckman, Thornton, Gold and Burckle use the Greek *Storge* to mean a friendship or companion type of love. It is the premise of this article that the Greek *Storge* applies to the more intense 'companion' form of relationship that can be found in parallel with *Eros* when considering the deep relationship between two people in a marriage or exclusive relationship and is not appropriate to the leader-follower relationship.

According to Grant (2000) *Agape* is a one-way form of love from God to people. Since leadership is a two-way interaction between leader and follower it is unlikely that *Agape* would apply even if *Agape* was a one-way form of love from one person to another. Pope (2002) adds to this understanding by suggesting that *Agape* is contrary to any self-gratifying relationship and instead only considers self-sacrifice as legitimate behavior. It is a premise of this article that leaders in a leader-follower relationship gain some self-satisfaction from the process and, thus, would not be limited to *Agape*.

Scott (1993) contends that *Agape* is a noun-form of love whereas *Agapao* is a verb-form of love. Thus, if Scott is accurate we can talk about *Agape* but we have to live out *Agapao*. This has some value for the understanding of 'love' in the leader-follower relationship in that we might consider *Agape* as a philosophy and *Agapao* as behavior. Scriptural support for this differentiation can be found in John 13:35: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" – 'love' here is *Agape* and is treated as a noun. Further support for this idea of noun-verb difference can be found in John 15:9: "'Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love' – the first two instances of 'love' are verbs (*Agapao*) and the last is a noun (*Agape*).

Beliefs and Principles of *Agapao* Behavior in the Leader-Follower Relationship

From the prior section *Agapao* seems to be action-oriented (verb) based on an altruistic relationship in which both the leader and follower are benefited through a morally 'right' process that is less intense than a marriage or exclusive-

relationship. The end result of the *Agapao* behavior should be the mutual benefit of both the leader and follower. The benefit, though, varies from leadership style to leadership style, which this article will explore as a means of showing the relationship of beliefs and principles.

What we believe to be true becomes the basis for our principles (if-then) relationships. For example if we believe that deeper respect comes from *Agapao* behavior rather than from non-*Agapao* behavior then we would operate under a principle that *Agapao* behavior will result in followers having higher levels of respect for the leader (if-then). If we believe that where this is more respect there is a higher level of output by the follower then a principle is that *Agapao* behavior results in higher levels of performance by followers. If we believe that these two principles occur when there is *Agape* belief in the relationship between leader and follower then *Agapao* develops as a natural course and not as a 'faked' set of behaviors in order to just get self-satisfaction. Thus, the principle is that through a philosophy of *Agape Agapao* behavior naturally emerges with a resultant higher respect for the leader and higher performance by the follower towards achieving the leader's goals. This works out differently in the four relational leadership roles: (a) transactional leadership, (b) paternalistic/maternalistic, (c) transformational leadership, and (d) servant leadership. There are other leadership styles such as laissez-faire, democratic, and autocratic that are not included in this article since these other styles tend to have a one-way or 'no-way' relationship between leader and follower.

Transactional Leadership and *Agapao*

Bass (1985, 1990) contends that the transactional leader seeks to gain the follower's efforts through the use of pay for performance, or contingent rewards. Bass makes a point that all leaders exhibit transactional styles to some extent. While Bass implies that leaders may not be interested in "excellence" when using the transactional style, thus potentially creating mediocrity, excellence can still be a focus of the leader. In transactional leadership the leader demonstrated *Agapao* behavior through the use of sufficient rewards and insures that the follower is well compensated for his/her work. It is through the "sufficient" wage that the leader shows his/her "love" for the follower. This can be summed up in the scriptural verses:

I Corinthians 9:9: "For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?" (emphasis mine)

I Timothy 5:18: "For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (emphasis mine)

In addition, the parable of the vineyard as presented in Matthew 20: 1-15 in which the landowner paid all the workers the same amount – a denarius, which represented the amount needed to pay for a day's living. It was in the landowners *Agapao* behavior of paying a minimum living wage for work, even if some workers worked less than others.

Paternalistic/Maternalistic Leadership and *Agapao*

According to Lee (2001), paternalistic leadership is characterized by respect, consideration, and the provision of information from the leader to the follower. These three characteristics have a direct tie to the definition of *Agapao* stated above. While Lee wrote about "paternalism" the same could be used for "maternalism". The paternal/maternal leader sees him/herself as the head of the family and seeks the effort of the follower as a means of supporting the present and future needs of the "family-organization" while seeking to prepare the next generation of "family-leaders".

In the paternalistic/maternalistic relationship *Agapao* behavior would take the form of nurturing, teaching, guiding,

supporting, empowering, and discipling the follower so that the follower's behaviors benefit both the family-organization and the follower. In some family-organizations there may be a sense of preservation on the part of the paternal/maternal leader that the leader will be taken care of in time as well.

Transformational Leadership and *Agapao*

Bass (2000) as well as Patterson, Russell, and Stone (2004) stipulate that transformational leaders do what they do in an effort to achieve the organization's goals. According to Bass and Avolio (1994) theorized that transformational leaders engage in four elements of behavior: (a) inspirational motivation, (b) idealized influence, (c) individual consideration, and (d) intellectual stimulation. Inspirational motivation is the behavior of the leader helping the follower to see that there is a higher reason beyond payment or contingent reward to engage in efforts to achieve the organization's goals. Idealized influence is the behavior of the leader toward the follower based on a high degree of morality, integrity, and trust by the leader toward the follower. Individual consideration describes the method by which a leader acts toward each individual follower in a manner that fits the follower. This is an adaptation of the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) into the "Platinum rule" – do unto others as they want you to do unto them. Intellectual stimulation is the *Agapao* behavior in which the leader helps develop the followers' critical thinking skills through the promotion of presenting new ideas and challenging the status quo.

Servant Leadership and *Agapao*

The servant leader, according to Patterson (2003) selects employees/followers that are aligned with the organization's values (person-organization fit) and seeks to understand the follower's vision with the intent of modifying the organization within environment/resource constraints such that the follower can achieve his/her goals. In addition, Patterson's model indicates that in this process leaders demonstrate trust, empowerment, and service to the follower. While Patterson's model contains seven variables beginning with *Agapao* love that leads to humility and altruism, which all proceed trust, empowerment, and service, it is the three variables trust, empowerment, and service that represent the outward behavior toward the follower.

Note that the focus in servant leader is to benefit the follower, even at the expense of the organization, which is in contrast to Transformational leadership that has a focus on benefiting the organization (Bass, 2000). Winston's (2003) extension of Patterson's model shows how the follower's behavior, in turn, benefits both the leader and organization. Both parts of the model combine to show a cyclical behavior pattern of leader to follower and follower to leader generating an ever growing sense of respect, commitment and service one to another.

The Beatitudes as a Base for *Agapao*

Winston (2002) posits that the seven beatitudes work together to form the framework for *Agapao* behavior. The first beatitude on "poor in spirit" presents a behavior of humility and teachableness that allows the leader to show respect to the follower and to gain from the follower's wisdom and insight. The second beatitude "mourn" presents the behavior of caring for the follower – physically (financially, security), mentally (intellectual stimulation) and spiritually (idealized influence, care for the deeper concerns of the heart). The third beatitude presents the behavior of "meekness" in which the leader shows controlled discipline in his/her actions toward to the follower. The fourth beatitude of hungering and thirsting for righteousness conveys the behavior of striving for what is right, just, and holy in the organization and for the follower. The fifth beatitude of mercy conveys the notion of behavior that seeks to understand and comfort rather than seek retribution. The sixth beatitude of being pure in heart calls for the behavior of focusing on what God has called one to do and not being side-tracked by less important purposes. The seventh beatitude of "peace-

making” implies the behavior of creating and sustaining an environment in which peace occurs and remains.

These seven behaviors embody the whole of altruistic relationship in which both the leader and follower are benefited through a morally ‘right’ process that is less intense than a marriage or exclusive-relationship and in which there is mutual benefit of both the leader and follower.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to present *Agapao* as a basis for leadership behavior and to show how *Agapao* works in different leadership styles. The primary benefit of the article to the reader is that it presents a biblical framework of philosophy (*Agape*) to action (*Agapao*) and helps the reader see how “good” leadership behavior develops and what good behavior should accomplish.

Bibliography

- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press
- Bass, B. M. (1990). “From transactional to transformational leadership: learning to share the vision.” *Organizational Dynamics*, 18 (3) 19-32
- Bass, B.M. (2000). “The future of leadership in learning organizations.” *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7 (3), 18-40.
- Bass, B.M. and Avolio, B.J. (Eds), (1994). *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Grant, C. (2000). *Altruism and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved November 18, 2007, from Questia database: [Http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=104996169](http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=104996169)
- Lee, H. (2001). “Paternalistic human resources practices: Their emergence and characteristics.” *Journal of Economic Issues*. 35 (4) 841-869.
- McKay, K. L. (1985). “Style and Significance in the Language of John 21: 15-17” *Novum Testamentum* 27 (4) 319-333
- Neto, F. Mullet, E., Deschamps, J-C., Barros, J., Benvindo, R., Camino, L., Falconi, A., Kagibanga, V., and Machado, M. (2000). “Cross-cultural variations in attitudes toward love add to favorites” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 31 (5) 626-635.
- Patterson, K.A. (2003). “Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model.” Doctoral Dissertation, Regent University. UMI AAT 3082719
- Patterson, K. A., Russell, R. F., and Stone, A.G. (2004). Transformational versus Servant Leadership - A Difference in Leader Focus. *Leadership & Organizational Development Journal*, 25, 4. 349-361
- Pope, S. J. (2002). “Relating self, others, and sacrifice in the ordering of love.” In *Altruism & Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy, & Religion in Dialogue*, Post, S. G., Underwood, L. G., Schloss, J. P., Hurlbut, W. B., & Pope, S. J. (Eds.) (pp. 168-180). New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved November 18, 2007, from Questia database: <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=104879863>
- Radic (no date) “Philemon vss 2-5” <http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/philemon/phlm05.html> (retrieved November 11, 2007)
- Ryckman, R. M., Thornton, B., Gold, J.A., and Burckle, M.A. (2002). “Romantic relationships of hypercompetitive individuals.” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 21, (5) 517 - 530
- Scott, B. B. (1993). “A Sapiential Performance of an Apocalyptic Discourse.” In *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (L. G. Perdue, B. B. Scott, & W. J. Wiseman, Ed.) (1st ed.). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 245-263 Retrieved November 18, 2007, from Questia database: <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=74644944>

Sopp, R. D. (no date) "When Love Projects" <http://www.biblebelievers.org.au/strat010.htm> (retrieved November 11, 2007)

Winston, B. E. (2002). *Be a Leader for God's Sake*. Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University-School of Leadership Studies.

Winston, B. (2003) "Extending Patterson's Servant Leadership Model: Coming Full Circle" Regent University School of Leadership Studies Servant Leadership Research Roundtable. October 16, 2003
<http://www.regent.edu/acad/cls/2003ServantLeadershipRoundtable/>

About the Author

Dr. Bruce Winston has been a part of Regent University since 1991, both with the School of Business and the School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship (GLE). Currently, he is the dean for the School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship. In addition to his administrative and academic duties as dean, he teaches in the GLE doctoral programs and is active in the GLE seminars and conferences. Dr. Winston's research interests include servant leadership, organizational development and transformation, leadership development, distance education and technology in higher education.