

Southern Adventist University
Knowledge Exchange

The Main Thing Devotional

Chaplain's Office

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Agape Love

Joseph Khabbaz

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“We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.” (1 John 3:16, NLT)

Love is tested by our ability to show it without seeking anything in return. On September 16, 1962, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. preached one of the greatest sermons on counter-cultural love at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA. The sermon is titled, “Levels of Love” whereby he sets a thesis on one of the most misunderstood expressions today, love. Dr. King preached that the highest form of love both displayed and described in the Bible is *agape*. During his sermon he provided a contemporary application by stating, “The person may be tall, or the person may be short. The person may be light, or the person may be dark. The person may be rich, or the person may be poor. The person may be up and in; the person may be down and out. The person may be white; the person may be black. The person may be Jew; the person may be Gentile...[but] you come to the point of loving *every* man and becomes an all-inclusive love. It is the love of God operating in the human heart.”

Dr. King was often attacked for his nonviolent approach, his incorporation of *agape* during the Civil Rights movement was frequently labeled as weak and sentimental. However, Dr. King believed that *agape* love was not at all weak, but one of the strongest powers that could be experienced, “It is a very stern love that would organize itself into collective action to right a wrong by taking on itself suffering.”^[1] The apostle John also describes “real love” as being strong through the ultimate act of self-sacrifice demonstrated by Jesus on the cross. Such love, real *agape* love, does something that no other love can do; it causes us to love others without seeking anything in return.

Today, our campus family will be participating in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend of Service. There are over 70 projects that students, faculty and staff will be engaged in to support the needs of our community. As we serve, we have the tremendous opportunity to show *agape* love to our neighbors without expecting anything in return.

REFLECT

- What does the apostle John mean when he says, “*So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters?*”
- What opportunities can you take to love your neighbor as yourself?
- How can you help foster a community not just *for* the hurt and mistreated, but a community *of* the hurt and mistreated?

NEWS & RESOURCES

- Signup for the **21-Day Challenge**, which began January 5. Students, faculty and staff are challenged to spend 21 minutes of devoted time with God for 21 days. Resources to get started, such as reading plans, prayer prompts, journaling guides, and more, are provided for campus at <https://bit.ly/3pteZTt>. Additionally, when completing the sign-up form, you can opt-in to receive text messages with reminders and encouragement. [#SAU21in21](https://twitter.com/SAU21in21)

- Follow **@ministryandmissions** on Instagram for updates on events and programs as well as encouraging messages and [check out our website](#) for many new resources.
- If you are feeling anxious or have recently experienced loss or grief, call 423.236.2782 to talk to a counselor on campus! (This is a free service for Southern students.)
- **Talk** with Chaplain [Anna Bennett](#) or [Joseph Khabbaz](#) if you need someone to pray with or have a desire to grow spiritually.