

God is Agape as presented in his classic book *Agape and Eros* by Anders Nygren, 1932 a book review by Lloyd Knecht. Anders Nygren appears to harmonize with the five primary aspects of *The Love of God* by John F. Peckham associate professor of theology and Christian philosophy at the Theological Seminary of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Five primary aspects of God's love.

1. Divine love is volitional but not merely. It includes a free volitional aspect that is neither essential nor necessary to God's being, yet it is also not arbitrary. God freely decided to create the world and bestow His love on all creatures. However, The divine-human love relationship Agape and Eros has been out of print for years but used copies are still available on Amazon.com for about \$50 to \$60. It's never safe to take someone else's evaluation of a book as important as one on God's love. Beckham notes that Nygren's views are the most prominent influence among Christians today.-

is neither unilaterally deterministic nor essential or ontologically necessary to God but bilaterally volitional and contingent.

2. Divine Love is evaluative This means that God is capable of being affected by, and even being benefited by, and being benefited from, the disposition and action of his creatures. God enjoys in, takes delights in, takes pleasure in, and receives value from the disposition and actions of his creatures while being displeased by evil. Whereas absent God's prior initiative sinful humans would be incapable of bringing anything valuable to God, through Christ's mediation humans may bring pleasure to God.

3. God's love is profoundly emotional, including deep and responsive affection and concern for his creatures, without amounting to undifferentiated sympathy. God is ultimately concerned with humans, feeling sorrow, passion and intense anger at evil, but also compassion and the desire to restore creatures to relationship.

4. Divine love is fore-conditional, that is that divine love is undeservedly bestowed prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. While divine love is surpassingly enduring, steadfast and reliable, humans may reject God's loving overtures and eventually, forfeit the benefits of his love. God's love is thus unconditional and conditioned in different respects. God's disposition of love is unconditional and

constant, but love relationships and the benefits thereof are finally contingent upon response.

The Love of God is recognized and appreciated by well-known scholars and makes a valuable contribution to the topic of God's love. John Beckham recognizes that the conversation on God's love will continue. However, his approach seems to have some presuppositions of his own.

Referring to Nygren's and Luther's view he asserts, "So goes the sweeping and highly influential *agape-eros* distinction, which has had significance not only in popular musings on love but even in some serious theological studies. If presuppositions regarding the meaning of biblical terms for love are left unchecked, one might possess this or another presupposition of God's love or *agape*, assume that is what is meant by the biblical term love, and read that preconception into the text every time terminology of love appears. This chapter seeks to avoid this outcome by a brief overview of the semantics of divine love, challenging the influential *agape-eros* distinction and, in the process, introducing the major biblical term for love that correspond to the wider fore-conditional-reciprocal model.

"The terms included in the following brief survey were selected in conjunction with the inductive reading, investigation and analysis of the canonical data." *The Love of God* p. 69

Revelation in scripture is progressive. This is the reason why Isaiah 52, 53 and Hosea give expanded understandings of the Messiah's love and mission than was revealed to and understood by Israel before. The sanctuary was a revelation as well, but Israel, in general looked to the sacrifices themselves rather than the One they prefigured, Jesus Christ.

Having studied John Beckham's books *Canonical Theology* and *The Love of God, A Canonical Model*. It appears to me that he gives insufficient weight to an important concept stated by John the beloved in the New Testament, "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No One has seen God at any time. The only begotten, Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father He has declared Him" (John 1:17, 18). He also seems to give little significance to the noun *Agape*, "God is *Agape*" (1 John 4:8, 16) as Luther and

Nygren do but refers repeatedly to the word group in which Agape as one of the words.

Beckham was unsatisfied, for whatever reason, with the “highly influential” scripture derived discoveries of Luther and Nygren. It seems plain that they drew their definition on the New Testament teachings of Jesus, Paul’s epistles, and the gospel and epistles of the Apostle John.

Upon what kind of scriptural evidence did Luther and later Nygren base their definition of *agape*? *Agape and Eros* by Anders Nygren must be read and compared point by point with John Beckham’s book, *The Love of God*, to see upon what evidence of scripture they agree or disagree. This I have done.

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Although Ellen White may not be considered by some as a recognized theologian , yet as a Seventh-day Adventists it is essential to give appropriate weight also to the inspired insights of Ellen G. White. I have made some comparisons and contrasts that may be useful. A correct understanding of the gospel depends in large measure on correctly understanding God’s love and our scripturally enlightened response.

He appears to allow the less exhaustive definition of love in the Old testament to diminish the *agape* motif as revealed in the New Testament especially by Jesus, Paul, and the inspired Apostle John. The verb and the adjective in the *agape* word group signifies a total commitment to either good or evil as manifest in Demas experience. (see *Agape and Eros* for the definition of *agape* in the relation of Jesus to Paul (1 Cor. 13 etc.) in Arabia.

As theologians I am sure that Luther and Nygren were aware of the other words related to *Agape* in scripture, the verbs and adjectives. Beckham recognizes that no one, including himself, Luther and Nygren, has the complete understanding of God’s love.

Beckam also disagrees with Luther and Nygren on the meaning of the word *caritas* which Augustine coined, which was an attempted synthesis of *agape* and *eros* according to Luther and Nygren. *Agape and Eros* p. 692

According to Beckham *caritas* is only human love, “proper human love, *caritas* ,is directed upward toward God....In this way Augustine’s” *The Love of God* p.

The subtitle in Beckham's book *The love of God* in the chapter, "Agape Versus Eros" appears to state the main objective of his book to minimize "The Theological Inflation of Agape". For the reasons above and other evidential reasons I am even more convicted, that in the main, Nygren and Luther were more right than wrong but fellowship with God needs further development.

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Luther as a Roman Catholic priest living in the medieval period and a student of Augustine, highly respected Augustine, yet rejected Augustine's attempted synthesis of the contradictory concepts of egotistic *eros* and theistic *agape* to define God's love, which according to Luther was the Roman Catholic understanding of God's love *caritas*.

This is confirmed in Luther's works in Romans and Galatians which I am currently reading. Beckham seems not to recognize Augustine's attempted synthesis of *eros* and *agape*. He refers to *caritas* as human love rather than *eros* derived from Plato and other pagan philosophers and introduced by the church father Origen and others.

We will spend eternity studying God's love and never will exhaust its height, width or depth. However, millions have been richly blessed by the beautiful biblical insights derived from the Greek noun *agape* used in Scripture and revealed in Nygren's book, "*Agape and Eros*". Rather than *agape* being a theological inflation of God's love it falls far short. *The love of God* p. 70

This may seem rather presumptuous, but we should be encouraged by the fact that God used spiritual laymen, as founders of the Seventh-day church to establish a system of truth from scripture that at that time was rejected by all the learned theologians of their day and ours, but the sanctuary truth that finds its complete fulfillment in Jesus Christ as the revelation of God's character of *agape* surpasses all others.

The writings of Ellen White harmonizes with scripture, Luther and Nygren. For example, she says, "God is love (*agape*). His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be" (PP p. 33).

"....we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we saw that it was God's glory to give. 'I do nothing of myself,' said Christ, 'the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father.' 'I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of Him who sent Me.'" John 8:26; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth the great *principle*

which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings, through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and service, a tide of love to the great source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great giver, the law of life" (DA p. 21). This statement harmonizes perfectly with the Apostle John's statement, "God is Agape". In using the word principle Ellen does not mean she is eliminating all emotion such as feelings of gratitude or joy, or exuberant praise but rather that emotions are not the essential meaning or basis of love as gift.

I don't find in either Luther or Nygren that "fellowship with God", the main purpose of His love, is a passive unemotional experience. Rather it produces the greatest emotions, but is based on principle and commitment, rather than emotion. A man and his wife illustrate this perfectly. They may dislike some action or experience, even disliking their spouse at that time, but the principle of love and its commitment are deep and abiding.

Beckham's book appears to support *caritas* concepts. Could this revival of *caritas* open the door to other corruptions evident in Catholicism? It reminds one of the One Project or the emergent church movement whose recommended reading and study list includes Ignatious Loyala, the Desert Fathers, and other Catholic and pagan authors all based on *caritas* concepts.

Beckham in interpreting Nygren's understanding of *agape* as, "the highest form of love, a unilaterally willed and purely altruistic beneficence that properly describes God's love alone" (*The Love of God* p. 21) Is challenged by Nygren, "Nothing could be more disastrous for the Christian idea of love that it should be identified with modern ideas of altruism, fellow-feeling, and so forth" (*Agape and Eros* p. 95).

Beckham also, in contrast to Nygren and Luther asserts, "Whereas love may be in self-sacrifice, Scripture does not restrict the concept of love to pure altruism. On the contrary, the Bible recognizes appropriate self-love and self-interest in contrast to selfishness and self-centeredness" (*The Love of God* p. 131).

Moreover, as God loves others and Himself as Trinity, the complementary nature of self-love *and* other-love is essential to the Trinitarian conception itself.

Ibid 157

"*Eros* is man's way to God. *Agape* is God's way to man. *Eros* is egocentric. *Agape* is theocentric.... Luther knows that it was Augustine above all to whom he was otherwise indebted who was primarily responsible for the prevalence of this attitude (*caritas*) in Catholicism. Even the Medieval idea of *caritas*, as we saw above, contains in its way an attack on self-love. But the peculiar thing is that the self-love it attacks is retained as the basis for the doctrine of love as a whole....Self-love is not to be enobled or refined but totally annihilated....Augustine speaks of a right self love, which seeks its satisfaction in God Himself." Nygren pp. 708, 709

According to Luther, and Nygren, "Everything in creation obeys the law of love. There is no tree in nature that bears fruit for its own use; The sun does not shine for itself. It is only man and the devil who in everything seeks their own. So far from self-love being a natural ordinance of God in nature, it is a devilish perversion.

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Jesus made several statements that strongly emphasized that self-love is not appropriate for the Christian but in His teaching affirmed the value of self-respect. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Matt. 16:24).

Ellen White confirms this thought, "Those who are true to their calling as messenger for God will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ (DA p.179). Christ tears away self-love. MH p.42 Hindrance to development of Christian character. CS p. 19 Self Respect: Cherish self-respect firmly and constantly. CH p. 295; MM p. 143; AH p. 404 Wow! Someone has said, "As I look at myself I know I am not what I want to be, but thank God I am not what I used to be."

A book review of "Agape and Eros" with reviewer's comments

Anders Nygren in his classic book on *Agape & Eros*, 1932, traced *agape* and *eros* and their meanings and influence in the history of the Christian Church.

English is a poverty stricken language when it comes to defining what love is, as I love ice cream, especially butter pecan. I love beauty as in a glorious sunset, I love money, at least what money can buy. I love my new Ferrari it gives me a sense of power, pride, and one-up-on-ship. I love my spouse. I would have to pay a fortune for all she does for me, plus affection and intimacy. I love God because He gives me a sense of peace and security, and assurance of eternal life.

This is human love, *eros*. We love what tastes good, looks beautiful, is of great value, or that or those who give us pleasure, especially God who can give me endless enjoyment in all these and more ways.

By nature humans are self-centered. Selfishness is sin. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one (Rom. 3: 10-18). Human values are based on knowledge, performance, skills, abilities, social relationships, position, riches, power and influence. Of course love is what all long for, from others and God. Even love for God or others is bent towards self-interest.

The Greek language has four specific words that leave little doubt as to the type of love we may speak of:

1. *Eros*. Heavenly *Eros*. A human acquisitive, egocentric love, the arising of the soul for fellowship with God in his holiness and majesty. This view came from the pagan philosophers Plato, Aristotle, Proclus and others, along with a belief in the natural immortality of the soul.

Augustine attempted to synthesize contradictory *eros* and *agape* calling it *caritas*, which is a Latin word from which we derive the English word *Charity*, as in the KJV. This is the love that came to be the Catholic understanding of love

Thus Augustine corrupted the Catholic understanding of love resulting in the idea of human merit as an essential means of salvation, an eternally burning hell for the unregenerate wicked and other corruptions of biblical truth. *Caritas* is not only the Catholic understanding of love but that of some evangelicals as well.

Lower or vulgar Eros is human intimacy, as in marriage. An egocentric love, the word Eros never appears in the Greek Bible

2. Phileo is brotherly love and affection. Philadelphia, the so called city of brotherly love derives its name from Phileo.
3. Storge is liking someone through the fondness of familiarity , family members or people who relate in familiar ways that otherwise found themselves bounded by chance.
4. *Agape*. Luther, so well-known for discovering righteousness by faith is not as well-known for discovering *agape* love in the Greek scriptures. This is God's love that compelled the Apostles and other believers to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the then known world. The Greek noun Agape occurs 320 times in the New Testament.

The educated gentile "church fathers" carried their pagan philosophies into the church beginning in the second and/or third centuries introducing numerous corruptions. The protestant reformation liberated *agape* from *caritas* on the basis of "sola scriptura"

Luther longed for fellowship with God, but knew from scripture and experience that he could never attain fellowship by his own effort but only as a sinner, in self-denial humility (Matt. 16:34) He enjoyed it as a gift from the divine-human Savior. Jesus was made sin that we might become the righteousness of God through Jesus imputed righteousness (2 Cor. 5:19-21). Biblically, God's joy is in loving and blessing his creatures. His sorrow is in man's ingratitude, unbelief, and the rejection of or taking His blessings for granted. This is rooted in His knowledge that sin corrupts and ultimately destroys His creatures.

There is no divine- human fellowship that doesn't include the thoughts and emotions of gratitude/praise/love in being an intentional and intelligent channel for God's love flowing, or overflowing, through us to others. Man can never be a passive channel of God's love as Paul affirms in 2 Cor. 5:14, "For the love of Christ compels us."

Agape is God's love defined by and manifested in the life of Jesus Christ. "For when we were still without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly....sinners, enemies (Rom. 5:6-10).

The New Testament alone has the most comprehensive picture of God's love as manifested in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them....but love your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing in return: and your reward will be great, and you will be sons (and daughter) of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil" Luke 6:32-36

Spousal love, family love, and community fellowship are all gifts from God, that sin has perverted and bent to self-serving. Our best intentions and actions are corrupted with self. Before Adam's sin these were all intended to be relationships and abilities derived from *agape* for blessing and serving God and others.

According to some Jewish friends, the closest word to *agape* in the Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh or, Old Testament) is Chesed, "loving kindness", although there are many Old Testament individuals that manifest the qualities of *agape*; Abraham out of love fellowship with God was willing to obey God in sacrificing his son. Being tested, Moses out of his love fellowship with God and rebellious Israel was willing to perish with them if God was unable to forgive them for their worship of the golden calf at Sinai. He appealed to the God he thought he knew so well. What will the Egyptians think of You, and remember your promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob Ex. 33: 11-13

In the gospels Agape and fellowship with God belong inseparably together. Christian love and fellowship with God is the theme in Jesus teaching and example, in the parables, the sermon on the mount, etc. (see Matt. 5-7)

God's love, *agape*, is creative, spontaneous and unmotivated, unconditional, changeless, self-denying, self-sacrificing. This is God's Holiness. God is *agape*. Luther expressed it this way, "We are not loved (by God) because we are lovely, we are lovely because we are loved." *Agape and Eros*, chapter six, part 4, page 722 and on.

Human nature cannot originate *agape*. We can only receive it as a gift from God by faith through the Holy Spirit by the word. This is most clearly revealed in Jesus

statement, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17)

Agape creates an intimate fellowship with God based on love, not law. This is the righteousness of God apart from the law, "Being witnessed by the law and the prophets" Rom. 3:21

Paul states that *agape* is how God deals with us. God's love for sinners becomes the basis and model of the believer's love for his enemies, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly....sinners....enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:6-10).

When a person surrenders the will to God as a response to God's love, He transforms it by His *agape*, and returns it to him purified. Then there is a willingness to let God work by His *agape* "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13)

Now His *agape* will work through a person to minister to others and even share the gospel with the helpless, sinners, enemies. John says that "God and *agape*" are synonymous "God is *agape* and He who abides in *agape* abides in God and God in Him" (1 John 4:8, 16).

In *agape's* deep experience it is an overwhelming covenant fellowship, as Jesus extravagantly proclaims, "This is eternal life that they may know you (intimately), the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3 Read the whole chapter).

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in an everlasting covenant with *agape* flowing from each of them to every member of the human race. The Son glorifies the Father and the Father glorifies the Son, and the Holy Spirit glorifies the Father and the Son, loving always flowing out from each to each and from them to the whole universe and all His creatures. (John 17; Rev. 1:1-3)

Agape is giving. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)

"The distinctive character of the *believer's* ethic, as it arises out of fellowship with God, can be summed up in Jesus words to His disciples: 'freely you have received, freely give'" (Matt. 10:8) Those who have received God's love (*agape*) are called

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to pass this joyful and liberating message freely to their fellow men” Anders Nygren, Swedish Bible Scholar, *God and Eros*, 1932, p. 91

Agape is forgiving/justifying. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Not imputing their trespasses to them” (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 3:23, 24; Col.2:13).

From *eros*, *caritas* teaches that we attain to fellowship with God based on our ascending (by merit) to His Holiness and Majesty. *Agape* teaches that we experience fellowship with God on our level as sinners. That is, that God, in Christ, descended in humility in taking our corporate fallen human nature, living out a perfect righteousness then imputing it to us who receive as a gift, His *agape* righteousness. We are born anew

Luther’s struggle against the upward tendency (of *caritas*) is: 1. The rejection of every idea of human merit, that is that we can in any way earn our salvation. 2. He is equally concerned to reject all attempts to ascend to God by reason, speculation, and mysticism, which permeates The Emergent church’s recommended reading lists including the spiritual exercises of Ignatious Loyola, the desert fathers, and others, which all derive from the concepts of Caritas.

Agape is the life of God. Eternal life is more than an endless existence, it is an endless, joyful, intimacy in fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and fellow believers in eternity (see 1 John). “Not that we loved God, but that He first loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). (Propitiation means, “the One to win our favor and love by shedding His blood to deliver us from our sins).

We receive salvation by faith, a heart appreciation response, to God’s *agape* as manifested through Jesus’ perfect life and sacrificial death on the cross. As we study His life, guided into all the truth of our glorious Savior by the Holy Spirit, the love of Christ compels us to joyful obedience to God and spontaneous unmotivated service to others without respect to persons including enemies.

When asked by the lawyer “What is the great commandment of the law?” Jesus replied, “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is One, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matt. 22:35-40; Deut. 6:4,5) Then added, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophet s(Matt. 22:35-40; Lev. 22:35-

40) This was to be a faith response for God's deliverance of Israel from bondage, passing the *agape* on to the poor and needy (see Matt, 5-7).

Jesus insisted that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31 In other words we are to love and serve others with the same commitment and intensity we loved and served self before knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is confirmed by Jesus when He said, "A new commandment I give you that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another (Joh n 12:34) He loved us more than He loved Himself. Satan would love for us think that Jesus was asking us to love ourselves, a devilish perversion. The New Testament authors understood that one of the ways we love God is "Love does no harm to +a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilment the of the law"

(Rom. 13:10}.

Ellen White never uses the word *agape* in her writings but the concepts are everywhere, "The Savior longs to give us a greater blessing than we ask. He delays the answer to our request that He may show us the evil of our own hearts, and our deep need of His grace. He desires us to renounce the selfishness that leads us to seek Him. Confessing our helplessness and bitter need we are to trust ourselves wholly to His Love" (DA 290)

The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 13:1-14:1 describes how our fellowship with God creatively instills in each of us His *agape*. Without *agape* all else is futile, regardless of our spiritual gifts or abilities. His song to Agape:

1. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not agape, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging symbol.
 2. And although I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not *agape*, I am nothing.
 3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not *agape*, it profits me nothing.
- Agape* suffers long and is kind; *Agape* does not envy; *Agape* does not parade itself; is not puffed up. does not behave rudely, **does not seek its own**, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

4. *Agape* never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues they will cease; whether there is knowledge it will vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophecy in part. But when that which perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away.
5. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as also I am known.
6. And now abides faith, hope and *agape*, but the greatest of these is *agape* Pursue *agape*". (That is, pursue God in your response to His pursuit of us).

There are three essential ways to love God with all our heart, with all our strength, and all our mind. (see Rom. 5:

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1. Faith. It is a heart appreciation response for who God is and what He has accomplished for us in Christ (Rom. 11:33-36). Praise Him for His *agape*!
2. Obedience. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Praise Him for Wisdom!
3. Intentionally and intelligently being channels for God's Agape, to flow through us in loving service to everyone Jesus died for. (Matt. 5:43-48) Praise Him for using us sinners to help other sinners know You!

God's *agape* draws each one with an unrelenting love to a decision. A decision related to judgment. Because *agape* is the essence of God's nature His love compels each one in unlimited devotion to a creative fellowship with Him. It is also an annihilating judgment on rebellious self-loves, who will not allow themselves to be recreated into a life of love in fellowship with God and the poor and needy.

The good news is that as we are learning to understand Agape love and how to pass it on to others, we have a promise, a guarantee, "I thank God for every remembrance of you....being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

God has given everyone freedom of choice confirmed and guaranteed by Jesus love sacrifice on the cross.

An illustration:

After teaching in the temple all day Jesus retired to the Mount of Olives for prayer and rest. At daybreak He appeared again in the Temple Court, where all the people gathered around Him, and He sat down to teach them.

The Scribes and Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught committing adultery and made her stand in the center of the group, then they said to Him,

Rabbi, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in our law (the Torah), Moses commanded that such a woman be stoned to death. What

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do you say?" They said this to trap Him they might have grounds for bringing charges against Him. But Jesus bent down and began writing in the dust with His finger. He seemed not to hear, but He did hear.

As they kept questioning Him He straightened up and said, "The one of you which is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her", then he bent down and wrote in the dust again.

Curious as to what He was writing they drew near. Looking over His shoulder they were shocked to see a record of their own sins written in the dust. They began to leave one by one, the older ones first, until He was left alone, with the woman still standing there.

"Standing up Jesus said to her, 'Where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one sir,'. Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Now go and don't sin anymore.' "Her heart was melted, and casting herself at the feet of Jesus, she sobbed out her grateful love and with bitter tears confessed her sins. This was the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to God and others.

(John chapter 8; MH p. 89) Amazing! Forgiveness preceded her confession.