



By Jason Reynado

Let me make a bold proposition to you on the subject of leadership - I propose that love and leadership go hand in hand. A few months ago, the 2d Cavalry Regiment (2CR) had its Semi-Annual Training Brief (SATB) with 7th Army Training Command (7ATC). A few things struck me as I sat there listening to the 7ATC Commanding General, Brigadier General Norrie. As each Squadron Commander and Command Sergeant Major in the room briefed their unit's progress he would tell everyone that briefed him how much he appreciated them for their efforts in making this unit successful. It was crazy to me how sincere he sounded in saying it and then in his closing remarks said, "I love you all and I appreciate the work that you are doing."

Now, for those of you that have never met him, you might think that it was insincere, but he actually encouraged us to tell our Soldiers those same words...“I love you all.” It is not that this was a novel concept, but it was an affirmation of what I already believed to be true. I do love my Soldiers, but I never thought it would be appropriate to tell them because I’d come off as soft or mushy. So my commander and I went all in that week. Instead of giving a boring safety brief before the long weekend, we told people how much we appreciated them and how much we love them. To our surprise, we actually had some Soldiers reciprocate. However, the question of how to show that love is one that many struggle with. Let me explain...

First, let’s start by clarifying the different types of love. You will not find these words in the English language, but you can find them in Greek. Love in the English language gets thrown around recklessly and many people tend to simultaneously associate it with physical attraction and their love for their favorite drink from their local coffee shop. But I’m talking about different types of love. In Greek, there are eight words which differentiate between the types of love, but these are the three I want to focus on:

- **Agape** (selfless unconditional love) is one that loves despite imperfections and inadequacies.
- **Philia** (affectionate love without physical attraction) is felt amongst friends that have endured hard times together.
- **Storge** (a love that resembles kinship), is a love that we feel with our comrades in arms, especially because many of our families do not understand our journey as Soldiers.

It is my belief that these three types of love directly correlate to us as leaders and as Soldiers. We must lead with love.

It Inspires Commitment from Soldiers

Army leaders must lead in a way that inspires action within our ranks. Leading with fear is a way to elicit a response from our subordinates, but it is merely a compliance response; they will act to avoid consequences. Soldiers will complete tasks if only to keep “leaders” away from them. They want no interaction with those authority figures (not leaders) because doom and gloom on a daily basis sucks the life out of people (I can tell you from experience).

On the other end of the spectrum, leading and encouraging with agape fosters a more sincere and proactive response. Agape does not expect perfection. Leaders that exhibit agape know that mistakes will be made, but they trust that the job will be done to the very best of the Soldier’s ability. As leaders, allowing that growth to happen when lives are not at stake is a way to build our Soldiers up so that they are ready if the worst-case scenario is ever realized.

Likewise, subordinates are more likely to complete the mission because they don’t want to let their leaders down. Agape cultivates an environment that subordinates do not dread throughout day-to-day operations; they are committed and inspired. This is the type of environment that enables Soldier initiative. Soldiers know “why” they are executing tasks and it isn’t a burden. It becomes a matter of pride to do a good job.

Love Builds Connection

Leading with love allows us to connect with our Soldiers. In finding that connection, we also find their passions and their talents. I would challenge Officers and NCOs to leverage and build the talents of Soldiers in their charge. How else can we expect people to excel if we don’t give them the opportunity to use their strengths? That connection also lets Soldiers know that we as leaders really do care about individual outcomes. Connection and community help hold people accountable for their actions.

In the Troop where I serve as a First Sergeant, we have gone over five years without a DUI. That's certainly not attributed to me or my leadership since I have only been in the position for a year. However, I think it is because the Soldiers are holding each other accountable. Most importantly, connection with others can decrease a Soldier's need to turn to a bottle to fill the void. As many leaders across the Army can attest, Soldiers often make their biggest mistakes when under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol is the center of gravity for the majority of misconduct throughout the Army.

Suicidal attempts and ideations, along with poor decision making, are less likely to happen for Soldiers that feel a greater connection to others. This is why *storge* and *philia* are so important. As I have returned from deployments, I didn't reach out to immediate members of my family when I found myself in despair. Rather, it was the people that shared in the same hardships. Just like during deployment, we were fighting the common enemy of depression. If it saves lives, why wouldn't we lead with love?

Love and Discipline

But what about discipline? Should we just say, "I forgive you" and move on without punishment all in the name of leading with love? Not at all. For those that have children or younger family members, think about how much you love them. In that love, you want what is best for them, so you discipline them when they are on the wrong path. You correct them so that they know you're watching and you're interested in helping them along their path.

Now, I don't like to compare my Soldiers to children because they are adults capable of making decisions, but I think there are parallels in how we wish those we love, to include our Soldiers, to grow and develop; this requires discipline and, sometimes, some tough love.

Ultimately, love inspires us in ways that fear cannot. It is out of *agape* that we serve our great nation. *Philia* and *storge* allow us to see beyond disagreements we may have with

others and allows us to be better communicators. It is out of agape that we are willing to lay our lives down for the 328 million Americans that enjoy their freedom. Finally, I often refer back to the Biblical Scripture that states, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Because of philia and storge I would be willing to defend your life if called to do so, even though I’ve never met you. Truly, I believe that each of you would do the same for me and others.

For this love, I am eternally grateful.

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