



All you Need is Love

By Marilyn Sharpe

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On June 25, 1967, the Beatles sang "All You Need is Love" live on the first TV program seen by satellite overmuch of the planet.

In a pre-broadcast interview, the four young vocalists from Liverpool, England, announced, "We're going to sing 'All You Need is Love'. It's a kind of subtle PR for God!"

God did some not-so-subtle public relations on the topic 2000 years ago when God sent Jesus to be that love, to show us how deeply we are loved, to teach us to pass on that love.

This month, shops are decked in pink and red and white. Hearts with lacy doilies abound. Romantic sentiments are everywhere. Even our candy says, "I love you."

This flirtatious love talk isn't really all we need. On February 15th it gets put away for 364 days.

What kind of love is "all we need"? What love gives life in our families? It is the hard kind, the God-kind of love. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes this love as "patient ... kind ... not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude ... does not insist on its own way ... not irritable or resentful."

Quite the opposite, this love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

How do we pass on this love in our families?

* First, let us learn to say, "I love you." Period. Not, "I love you when you are so helpful, get good grades, are kind to your siblings, or don't sass me." No, just, "I love you." Period.

* Second, separate your child's personhood from their behavior. Love the child (or youth or teen or young adult) while disapproving of the behavior.

* Third, love the child enough to correct misbehavior and say "no." Do it in a way that preserves the child's self-respect and affirms that you know they can do what is right.

* Fourth, love the "other-ness" about each person in your family. Affirm those differences in interests, gifts and temperament as gifts from God to be celebrated, not fixed.

* Fifth, practice grace. When you have been unloving, apologize. When your child has erred, accept their apology with forgiveness.

Remember, "We love because [God] first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

Family Activities

1. Catch your kids being kind, thoughtful, sharing and caring. Say, "Now, that's what I call God's kind of love!"

2. Bake and deliver cookies for a person in your neighborhood who doesn't have many visitors.

3. Pack "love rations," non-perishable food items, like a granola bar, dried fruit, cheese or peanut butter crackers, juice box and gum in a bag. Keep it in the car to give to people asking for food or money.

4. Make a "just wanted you to know we're thinking of you" card for a shut-in or hospitalized person in your congregation. Have the kids do the art.

5. Let each person have one meal at which the other people at the table name what they appreciate about the person being honored