



LOVE ONE ANOTHER

By Marilyn Sharpe

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

John 13: 34

What would it mean to love one another as God in Jesus Christ has first loved us? Let's explore a few of the elements of loving our children with the love of Christ.

Know each child uniquely. Each and every child yearns to be known, just as they are. None of us wants to be compared to a sibling, cousin, classmate, or friend. Name their gifts. Each is uniquely created by God, with special gifts and passions, interests and fears, successes and challenges. Celebrate those differences.

Separate behavior from personhood. When you correct your child's behavior, make it clear that it is the behavior, not the person that you dislike. This says to your child, "I may not approve of your behavior, but I always love you." We can change our behavior; we cannot change our personhood.

Forgive one another. Before becoming a parent, I thought that I was patient, kind, loving, generous. Then, I found myself yelling at a two year old that I loved more than life itself. I dropped to my knees, held her hands, and said, "Can you forgive me for losing my temper? I am so deeply sorry." She did. Then and there, I knew what it was to experience the grace of God. Confession and absolution aren't just for Sunday morning.

Love one another, no matter what. In Judith Viorst's book, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, we meet a little boy whose mother loves him, no matter how miserable and whiney he is. We all have days like that. Would that we could pass on love like that to the children we love.

Express love every day. Express that love in words; in loving acts of service; in little surprise gifts that delight; with physical affection; and by choosing to spend quality time together.

This is what Jesus did. Can we do the same for family, community, nation, and world? Imagine if we and our children could pass on this love to all God's family.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Affirmation Dinners: perfect for a birthday. Give each person a tea light candle. Let each light their candle, naming a gift, quality, or behavior in the honoree for which they thank God.
2. Put love notes in school lunches, camp duffle, backpack, or on a pillow.
3. Catch them being good. Be twice as vigilant to observe good behaviors and qualities, as you are to catch them doing it wrong.
4. As a family, commit to doing "random acts of kindness." Brainstorm kind, loving things that you can do for one another and for others outside your home who need this.

On a day when behavior has been challenging and difficult, wrap your arms around your child and say, "I love you." (This works for teens and