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Teach Children to Love All People

In today's diverse world, people have an assortment of physical abilities, skin colors, cultural backgrounds, and religious beliefs. And children notice these differences among individuals. Kids of all ages may be unsure how to act toward people who are different from them. For example, young children may be fearful, while preteens may resort to name-calling.

No matter a person's appearance or situation, we can be sure of one thing: Jesus loves and values him or her and calls us to do the same. This issue of "The Parent Link" explores ways you can focus on that important message during February, a season of love.



Acknowledge the differences that children notice in people. Answer children's questions honestly and factually. Brushing over such inquiries may send the message that there's something "wrong" with that person.

Encourage children to look for positive qualities in people. Focus on what makes each person special and unique. Children who feel secure in themselves are less likely to feel prejudice toward others.

Let children explore their differences. Allow them to interact with kids from other cultures. Talk about other religious beliefs, while acknowledging that there is only one true God.

Be a role model of love and acceptance. If you want your children to respect differences, you need that same approach to life yourself. As your role model, use Jesus, who not only spoke about compassion but also befriended society's outsiders and outcasts.

Our Varied World

- Nearly one in six children has mental disabilities, autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, or other developmental disabilities.
- In America's public schools, 42% of students are now racial minorities, up from 22% three decades ago.
- Traditional nuclear families now represent only half of the U.S. population.

PowerSource



Ask God:

1. To give your children a loving spirit toward all people.
2. To help your children embrace and celebrate people's differences.
3. To help your children look beyond appearances and live out their compassion daily.

Parenting Insights

Even young children can learn that God loves people of all colors, shapes, and sizes. John Perkins, publisher of *Urban Family* magazine, offers these tips for overcoming racism:

- **Realize that love is every person's most basic need.** "The first step is to help children understand God's love and its power," Perkins says. "Our love for Jesus is to be demonstrated by the way we love each other."
- **Treat people equally.** By showing evenhandedness in your interactions, you model Jesus' acceptance and draw others to accept his love.
- **Become secure in God's love for you.** "Deal with your insecurities and help others deal with theirs," Perkins advises. "Insecurity causes one person to exploit another."

OpenTheBook

"Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.... If we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us."

1 John 4:11-12

As children see on Valentine's Day, love is meant to be given away. By loving all of God's people, we show gratitude for his deep love for us.

Teachable Moments

- 1. Common Grounds**—When children point out people's differences, have them help you list ways that everyone is alike (we're all God's children, we all have feelings, and so on).
- 2. It's a Diverse World**—Choose books, videos, and toys featuring a range of ethnicities. Read about people overcoming physical challenges.
- 3. Make a New Friend**—Invite someone with a different cultural background to your house. At dinner, have him or her share customs, traditions, and stories.
- 4. Include Others**—Ask people who might normally feel left out to join you on family outings (for example, single parents and their children, kids from less-privileged backgrounds, etc).



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." **Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

It's often easy to love people who look like us, but God instructs us to look beyond appearances. Use these questions to start an important conversation with your children.

1. Think about your friends: How are they all alike? How are they each different?
2. Why do you think God made such a variety of people? What would life be like if everyone looked and acted the same?
3. How does it feel to be judged based on what you look like? When you judge someone only by appearances, what might you miss out on?
4. What are some ways to show love toward people who are different from you?

Family Experience: Love One Another

Explore some ways to put love into action by using these ideas from Group's Hands-on Bible.

- **The #1 Command**—Grab some pencils, markers, and big sheets of paper. Have family members take turns lying down on the paper. Use the pencil to trace around each body outline. Use markers to fill in facial features, hair, and clothing. Then read Mark 12:28-31 together. Around your shape outline, write ways you can love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. On the bottom, write ways you can love your friend or family member as yourself. (If you're stuck, think how you'd like to be treated!)
- **God Is Love**—As a family, cut a large heart out of white poster board. Mount it on a slightly bigger piece of colored poster board. Write the words of 1 John 4:7-8 around the heart. Hang it on a wall. Tear red construction paper into small pieces big enough to write on. Put the pieces in a bag or bowl near your poster. Every time a family member shows love, he or she should write it on a paper piece. Glue or tape the piece to the heart.





What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Coraline* (Feb. 6)

Genre: Animated Fantasy/Adventure

Rating: PG (for thematic elements, scary images, some language, and some suggestive humor)

Cast: Dakota Fanning, Teri Hatcher, Dawn French

Synopsis: When a girl walks through a secret door in her new home, she discovers an alternate version of her life. It's very similar to her real life, but she actually perceives it as much better. This adventure soon turns dangerous when Coraline's fake parents try to keep her in this alternate life forever. She must figure out a way to get back home to save herself and her real family.

Discussion Questions: What might it be like to have a different life or different parents? Why do you think God has placed you in this family and in these circumstances? How can we discover God's plans for us?



What Music Is Releasing

Artist: David Cook

Album: *David Cook*

Artist Info: When he picked up a guitar at age 13, David Cook knew rock 'n' roll was the style for him. He reluctantly auditioned for *American Idol* season seven and eventually won. A week later, he broke chart records when 11 of his songs debuted on Billboard's Hot 100 chart.

Summary: Cook's debut album deals with relationships, loneliness, and life on the road. The songs, ranging from ballads to rock anthems, are full of poetic, heartfelt lyrics. "Permanent" is about his brother's struggle with brain cancer. Cook calls writing music "therapeutic," saying it's "an outlet to express negative energy."

Discussion Questions: What are some positive and negative ways of expressing tough emotions? When you're having a bad day, what's your best outlet or stress-reliever?



What Games Are Out

| Title | Content | Rating & Platform |
|--|---|-------------------|
| <i>WordJong Party</i> | This simple puzzle game has a low level of difficulty. Players compete to spell the longest words possible. | E; Wii |
| <i>Prince of Persia: The Fallen King</i> | A cartoon hero battles corrupt forces. This game is tamer than its more-mature versions. There's no blood or gore. | E; Nintendo DS |
| <i>SPRay</i> | This adventure game features an angel and a devil who spew gross liquids from their mouths. The game contains mild cartoon violence, as well as burping and flatulence. | E10+; Wii |

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- Facebook is the hot new hangout for parents. Millions of them now use the social-networking site to keep family and friends informed about their growing children.
- More parents are turning to home remedies for the sniffles. Now that cold and cough medicines for children are out, chicken soup and nasal washes are in.

Quick Stats

- In an online survey, 73% of respondents said they secretly love their kids more than their spouse; 17% said they love both the same; and 11% said "my spouse comes first."
(nymetroparents.com)
- About 1 in 200 children is a vegetarian. The rate for teenagers might be four to six times higher, surveys suggest.
(Associated Press)



February 2009

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