

LOVING ONE ANOTHER

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If we truly loved one another, we would have perfect family unity. Just imagine it! Hard to visualize isn't it! We might even say it is impossible. To love someone is to have profound, tender, passionate affection for them. This would describe the love that couples should have for one another. Love can also be a personal attachment or bond, such as a very good friend, or a loved pet.

Let's consider first things first. The greatest love of all. We know that Jesus loved us unconditionally. That means that despite our sinfulness, He laid His life down to give us an eternal future in His family. He had the big picture even though we hadn't been thought of yet. He wanted us to become His children so He overlooked the wrong we were going to do, and offered us His love and the freedom that came with His incredible sacrifice.

Even now, we know that He doesn't always like the things we do, but He values us as individuals. He prefers to see the good in us and forgives our wrongdoing once we confess it. He is our ultimate example. He wants us to look at others as He sees them – with forgiveness, patience and because we are family.

Love is a two-way thing. Someone who demonstrates love for another and gets no acknowledgement will soon turn his affection to another. In families, we need to learn to value one another so that we don't give up and turn our backs on anyone. How can we love unconditionally? We have a natural bond. We are born or adopted into the same family, have the same name and identity, and are constantly with one another.

Jesus also commanded us to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves, and to treat each other with brotherly affection. Already I can hear some of you saying, "But I don't even *like* my brother (or sister for that matter), so how am I supposed to love them?" As parents we have the responsibility of being good role models and of training our kids to love each other. So let's get to it!

We know what love is supposed to look like, so what sabotages it? Since love is a giving thing, selfishness will kill it right there. We need to show our kids that it is not all about 'me', but to care for and see to the needs of others. Kids need to feel what it is like to be valued – given attention, and praised. When they *feel* what care, love and compassion does to them, they will understand the need to pass it on to other family members so they can experience the same thing. Criticism kills self-worth. The atmosphere in the home needs to be positive and parents are responsible for making sure it stays that way. Fighting needs to be stopped before it gets out of hand. Bad mouthing one another and speaking

without thought also wounds the soul. When trust and respect have been broken down, walls of defense are built up as a means of protection.

Use Jesus as the model and act as He would. Create and write down a family value relating to love and respect. Describe your expectations to your kids. You might say, "Love and respect in this home means a) We do kind things for one another; b) We put others before ourselves; c) We speak nicely to one another; d) We resolve our differences by discussion without yelling at or fighting. Train your children to meet your expectations and praise their efforts.

To love someone is not something that is merely said. It is something that is demonstrated. Your family will stand head and shoulders above many others if you apply the principles that Jesus taught us. We need to love one another the way He loves us.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.