

Read: 1 John 3:18-24

Reflecting God's Love

1 John 3:18,23

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.... This is his command, to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What do you think of when you hear the word “love”? Maybe you think of Valentine’s Day, when red, pink, and white chocolates show up in the stores; you hand out cards and candy hearts to your friends; and grown-ups give each other flowers, say “I love you,” and kiss.

None of those are bad thoughts, but they’re not what the apostle John means by love. The Greek word used for “love” in today’s reading is a special word: *agape* (ah-gah-pay). *Agape* isn’t something that you say to someone; it isn’t a feeling that can change from day to day. *Agape* is an action word. It’s not just saying, “I love you,” but also showing someone how much you love them. It’s the things you *do* rather than just the words you *say*.

Agape love shows up in one of the most famous passages in the Bible—John 3:16: “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.” God is the best example of *agape* love that exists. From the very beginning of our lives, he knew how totally and completely unlovable we are. But instead of hating us, God loved us. Then he showed how much he loved us by sending Jesus to us. There is no *sin* you commit that Jesus did not die to save you from. There is no *guilt* that you bear that Jesus’ cross does not relieve.

There’s an important connection between the love that God showed for us in sending his Son and the love that we should show to others. We don’t love others on our own. We *can’t* love others on our own. But because of the great love God showed for us, we respond in love—both love for God and love for those around us.

The next time you say “I love you” to your mom and dad, don’t forget about how you *show* your love for them. Think about God’s *agape* love and how you love others because God loved you. Think about love as an action, not just a feeling. What a privilege to be able to show God’s love to those around you!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Give one way you can tell that your mom or dad love you.
- In what way did God show his love for us?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Can we show love to others on our own? Why or why not?
- Give two specific ways you can act to show love to those around you.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- If God so loved the world, why isn't everyone going to heaven?
- When we don't act in ways that show love, how do we know that God still loves us?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me enough to send your Son to save me from my sins. Help me to share this love with others not only through my words but also through my actions. Amen.

Hymn: CW 385:1,4-5 – Chief of Sinners Though I Be

Chief of sinners though I be,
Jesus shed his blood for me,
Died that I might live on high,
Lives that I might never die.
As the branch is to the vine,
I am his and he is mine!

Oh, the height of Jesus' love,
Higher than the heav'ns above,
Deeper than the depths of sea,
Lasting as eternity,
Love that found me—wondrous thought!—
Found me when I sought him not.