



Love One Another

(based on John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-11, 20-21)

On Sunday, the Lord's Day, Mahir and Leyla walked with their parents to the home of fellow Christians to pray, worship, and learn. They celebrated the Lord's Supper, remembering how Jesus loved them. This was where they worshiped God, not in a special building, but in one another's homes.

The leader told the story of Jesus and his last meal with his disciples. The people who gathered in the home heard the story about the night before Jesus was crucified. That night, Jesus washed the feet of his friends and then gathered his friends for a meal, giving them bread to eat and a cup to drink. Mahir, Leyla, and the others were reminded that Jesus told his followers, "I have a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Leyla and Mahir, and many of the others in the house, smiled. They liked hearing about Jesus and being a follower of his. The commandment to love one another was nice. It didn't seem too hard.

Then the worship leader read a letter from John the Elder. John wrote about Jesus' commandment to love one another. The letter said, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God. God sent Jesus into the world so that we might live through him. That's what love is all about: not that we loved God, but

that God loved us first and sent Jesus to love us and show us the way to God. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another."

That seemed nice too, Mahir and Leyla thought. They were feeling all warm and fuzzy inside.

The letter continued, "Those who say, 'I love God' and are not kind to their brothers and sisters are liars. If we don't love actual people whom we can see, we cannot love God whom we have not seen. The commandment we have is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."

Uh-oh! Leyla and Mahir looked at each other, and they weren't the only ones. All around the room people young and old shuffled, looked away, or glanced at one another awkwardly. Mahir remembered taking the warm bread dripping with honey and eating it all before Leyla could have any, and Leyla remembered teasing her little brother until he cried last week. Others were thinking of the times they weren't very kind. Maybe loving one another wasn't so easy.

Mahir leaned over to Leyla and took her hand. Leyla squeezed it and said, "I love you too." Then everyone looked around and smiled. All these people were their brothers and sisters in Jesus. They started hugging one another and speaking words of forgiveness and love.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Read *Love* by Matt de la Peña (G.P. Putnam's Sons *Books for Young Readers*, 2018) or watch the YouTube video "Love by Matt de la Peña and Loren Long" (bit.ly/LoveDeLaPena, 6:07). Talk together about the words and images used for love in this story. Wonder together what words and images you would use for how love is expressed in your family.
- Jesus washed his disciples' feet to show love. Sometimes love is shown through acts of caring. This may be doing laundry or making dinner, shoveling snow or pulling weeds. Acknowledge how each person in the family shows love through actions. Express gratitude to one another.



Responding to God's Grace

- 1 John 4:19 tells us that we love because God first loved us. Make a list of the many ways you experience God's love. Cut the list into individual strips of paper and put them in a bowl. Have each family member draw a strip of paper each day and either carry it with them or put it in a place where they will see it and remember God's love for them.
- John 13:34 tells us that Jesus said that everyone will know we are his disciples when we love one another. Make a list of the many ways you each show your love for others. Post the list. Have each family member choose one way to focus on and be intentional about for the day or week. Talk together about your experiences of being intentional about showing love through your words and actions. Celebrate the witness you have offered as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Watch the YouTube video "Lettuce Love One Another—VeggieTales T4E14" (bit.ly/LettuceLoveOneAnother, 14:26) and celebrate the ways we can love one another.
- Making food for others is often a way love is expressed. It takes time and attention, two ingredients that show love. Make cinnamon love knots as a family. Enjoy them with one another. Share with others. Use the recipe at bit.ly/CinnamonLoveKnots or make a favorite family recipe of your own.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

Loving God, thank you for loving me. Amen.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.