

## Loving the Kids

by Nancy Wilson

*The older women likewise . . . that they admonish the young women . . . to love their children . . . that the word of God may not be blasphemed (Titus 2:3-5).*

Much is involved in loving children. God has blessed mothers with a natural love for their own babies, but in our day even that natural inclination is being repressed by mothers who abort their young, or hand their children off at day care centers for hirelings to raise.

But a Christian woman who neither aborts her child nor abdicates her responsibilities still needs to learn to love her children the way the Bible requires. The natural feelings of affection don't go far enough. All the sentimental visions of the blessedness of motherhood can vanish in the wake of the hard work of loving, teaching, disciplining, cleaning, and nursing that is required. If Christian women are counting on their natural reservoir of motherly affection to sustain them through the day-to-day commitment of serving and training their children, they will soon run out of gas and wonder what has happened.

Of course, running out of gas is the best thing that can happen to get their attention. God uses such times to direct His children back to Him, the source of all strength and love. If mothers turn to Him to provide them with love for their children, soon they will begin loving with a much greater love than they had in themselves.

Children go through stages when they are more lovable, and stages when they are less lovable. When they are cuddly and cute, it does not require grace to love them. All the girls at church want to hold them! But when they hit the awkward ages of say 9 or 10, who is interested anymore? Some children never are exceptionally cute, so maybe they were never in great demand to be held in the first place. The point is, mothers need heavenly grace to love their children through all the stages, from the adorable toddler stages through the acne-faced teenage years. A mother's love should be consistent and unconditional, regardless of the loveliness or unloveliness of the child. This requires grace, and if a woman tries to do it without God's grace, she will necessarily fail.

This means prayer and confession of sin. It means *not feeling guilty* about needing grace in the first place. When a mother begins to develop a negative feeling toward

a child, if she begins to find herself easily annoyed by one of her children, she needs to confess her lack of love as well as any related sins and ask God to give her strength to love. Loving is not just hugs, but it certainly includes lots of hugs. Often the child who needs the loving the most is the one who is overlooked. I frequently tell mothers who are having trouble with one of their children, to grab the child every time he walks by and give him a hug and a kiss. Little kids (as well as big ones!) are bottomless pits for love and affection. Sometimes bad behavior can be an attempt to get attention, because the child thinks any attention, even negative attention, is better than nothing.

Older children are generally given responsibilities sooner than the younger children out of necessity. But in caring for the little ones, the bigger ones must not be overlooked. They still are in special need of affection and affirmation. Mothers can feel very inadequate, and really, when you think about it, they are! Who is up to the incredible demands put on mothers every day? Supermarkets are great laboratories for observing how mothers handle their responsibilities without grace. Children are yelled at, ignored, or catered to in unbelievable fashion. Christian mothers have supernatural resources for performing the duties God has called them to. Unfortunately, these heavenly resources are often ignored. But it doesn't take long before a Christian mother realizes how much she needs God's help: love, patience, kindness, and self-control are needed in large quantities every day!

If you have been feeling overwhelmed by your responsibilities, cast all your cares on Him. If you have been having trouble loving one (or all) of your children, look first for spiritual solutions. Confess bitterness, resentment, a critical spirit, unforgiveness, lack of love. Begin to pray for your child and look to minister to specific needs. Look for the physical solutions as well. No one wants to hold a baby that smells bad. Keep your babies clean and combed and smelling sweet. We are creatures, and we should understand our own weaknesses. It is simply easier to love and minister to our children when we keep their hair clean and their clothes washed and their noses wiped. With older children who may be feeling alone in the midst of many younger children, give them special privileges along with their responsibilities. Take them on a date, just the two of you. Spend some time together. Allow a later bedtime occasionally so you can visit over cocoa. God can bless your efforts to strengthen the relationship.

And do not lose heart. We all stumble in many ways. Our children are a heritage from the Lord that we do not want to squander. It is not enough to just have them in our home, we must love them faithfully. This will look different at different stages,

but it should be the same, God-given love from start to finish. Moms who think they can love and serve their children in the flesh may be able to for a very short time. The sooner they realize they need God's intervention, the sooner their children will be loved the way they really need to be.

### **Top Ten Sayings of Biblical Mothers**

10. Samson! Get your hand out of that lion. You don't know where it's been! (Judges 14:5-8)

9. David! I told you not to play in the house with that sling! Go practice your harp. We pay good money for those lessons!

8. Abraham! Stop wandering around the countryside and get home for supper!

7. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! Leave those clothes outside, you smell like a dirty ol' furnace!

6. Cain! Get off your brother! You're going to kill him some day!

5. Noah! No, you can't keep them! I told you, don't bring home any more strays!

4. Gideon! Have you been hiding in that wine press again? Look at your clothes! (Judges 6:11)

3. James and John! No more burping contests at the dinner table, please. People are going to call you the sons of thunder! (Mark 3:17)

2. Judas! Have you been in my purse again?! (John 12:6)

1. Jesus! Close the door! What do you think, you were born in a barn?

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