



February 2015

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



through excellence in
ministry to children.

St. Luke UMC
www.stlukeumc.org

Put Love Into Action

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To help your children realize the depth of God's love for them.
2. To give your kids a loving spirit toward all people, including those who are different from them.
3. To guide you to live out your love daily.

"Love" is a theme seen throughout the month of February, but it doesn't mean much unless we put it into action. As Christians, we have the perfect example of love in action: God sending his only Son, Jesus, to die for our sins and rise again to give us new life.

God, who *is* love (1 John 4:8), calls his followers to love one another as he has loved us (John 15:12). That includes people of different skin colors, cultural backgrounds, physical abilities, and even religious beliefs. Kids notice differences and may be unsure how to treat people.

But no matter a person's appearance or situation, Jesus loves and values him or her, and he calls us to do the same.

As parents, you play an important role in teaching your children how to love others in both word and action. Here are some helpful tips to follow.

- Acknowledge the differences that kids notice in people, and allow them to explore those differences.
- Encourage children to look for positive qualities in others. Focus on what makes each person special and unique. Kids who feel secure in themselves are more likely to embrace other people with love.
- Be a role model of love and acceptance. If you want your kids to express love, you need that same approach yourself. As your role model, remember Jesus, who befriended outsiders and outcasts.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

God's Heartbeat

With masking tape, create a heart outline on the floor. Say: **Let's read what the Bible says about love.** Read aloud 1 John 4:8.

Ask: **What do you think it means that God is love? When you think of his love, what words come to mind?**

Have family members stand on the heart outline and hold hands. Say: **I'll squeeze the hand of the person to my right. When you feel a squeeze, pass it on to the next person.**

Continue until there's a good rhythm of squeezes. Say: **Think of this as God's heartbeat. When we receive his love, we can give it away and keep that love going and going!**

Ask: **What are some loving things people have done for you? What are some ways you pass along God's love to other people?** Close in prayer.

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Love One Another

Exchanging cards and treats on Valentine's Day is a small reminder that love is meant to be given away. Use that tradition as a springboard to discuss how much God loves each of us—and how we, in turn, get to share that love with other people. Remind your children that God's love isn't performance-based. In other words, he doesn't love us more or less depending on what we do or don't do. Instead, our loving actions are merely a grateful response for the love that God gives us so abundantly. Try a few of the fun activities below to reinforce the importance of loving others—inside and outside your family.

Living Valentines—Give each family member a heart-shaped candy, and share the messages written on them. Read 1 John 3:18, and discuss what it says about showing love. Put that love into practice by exchanging candies with another family member, giving them a hug, and saying, "Jesus loves you—and so do I!"

Woven With Love—If you have a chain-link fence (or can obtain permission to decorate one at or near your church), create a symbol of God's love. Weave red and white crepe-paper streamers in and out of the fence to make a design, such as a white heart with a red cross in the center. Pray together, asking God to use the image to remind your neighbors of his great love for them.

Secret Valentines—Have family members choose names so each person has a Secret Valentine. During February, surprise one another with encouraging notes, treats, and help with chores. At the end of the month, reveal the names of Secret Valentines and express appreciation for all the love that was shown.

A Cool Valentine—If there's snow on the ground near Valentine's Day, go on a chilly mission to send

lovely greetings to special people. Fill a squirt bottle with water and some red food coloring. (Or buy snow markers, available at Target.) Locate a large area of fresh, untracked snow in your valentine's yard. Stomp the outline of a large heart, beginning at the bottom point, keeping your footprints close together. Then squirt the snow inside the heart with colored water. Leave a valentine card (and some cookies!) on the porch.

Polar Molar—Ahead of time, freeze some bubble gum. Read Matthew 24:12, and give each family member a frozen piece of gum. Have them race to soften it and try to blow a bubble. Then talk about how that cold gum is like a cold heart—and how you can "soften" your heart. Also discuss how you can show God's warm love to people with cold hearts who might be sad, lonely, or scared.

Name Game—Come up with ways to show God's love to other people based on the first letter of your first names. For example, Tristen can "tell" people Jesus loves them. Hannah can "help" someone carry groceries. Read John 13:35. Say that other people know us by our names, but Jesus knows us by how we love one another.

"Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God...If we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us."

—1 John 4:7,12

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIES

Title: *SpongeBob: Sponge Out of Water*

Genre: Animation, Adventure, Comedy

Rating: Not yet rated

Cast: Antonio Banderas, Clancy Brown, Tom Kenny

Synopsis: This is the second feature film starring SpongeBob SquarePants, the popular character from the Nickelodeon TV series. (The first released back in 2004.) SpongeBob and his friends must recover the Krabby Patty recipe from a pirate.

Our Take: *SpongeBob* has taken some heat from parents because of its rude language, name-calling, and cartoon violence. The movie will likely be more appropriate for older kids—about 8 and up.



MUSIC

Title: *No Turning Back*

Artist: Brandon Heath

Synopsis: This is the fifth studio album for award-winning Christian singer and guitar player Heath, 36. He first heard about Jesus at age 16, while attending a summer camp. Since then, Heath has stayed involved with Young Life. He uses personal lyrics to explore faith's role in people's lives.

Our Take: Older kids will enjoy Heath's radio-friendly hooks and encouraging messages. On "No Turning Back," he beckons listeners to decide to follow Jesus, like he did. "I made up my mind, I leave it behind," Heath sings of the world's distractions.



CULTURE & TRENDS

E-Cig Regulations—Due to a patchwork of state laws, an estimated 16 million children can legally purchase e-cigarettes. Only three states (New Jersey, North Dakota, and Utah) prohibit indoor e-cigarette use. (*Centers for Disease Control & Prevention*)

Naming Trends—More parents are selecting their children's middle names based on real-life or fictional heroes (Angelou, Austen, LeBron, Malala). Other trends include Kale (not just a food anymore!) and exotic hues such as Cerulean and Azure. (*today.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Hohokum

This artistic PlayStation game filled with color and music has a unique look and a relaxing effect. The player becomes a kite-like creature who floats through different worlds. The game is a curious adventure filled with nooks and crannies. (Rated E10+)

BuildWithChrome

Lego and Google Chrome teamed up on this virtual playground, where builders of all ages can construct their own projects. Kids can just start creating or can take lessons from a Build Academy, which get increasingly more complex.

Homes by Tinybop

With this app for iPhones and iPad (\$3.99), users embark on interactive tours of homes across the world. Kids can make meals, decorate, explore rooms and working models of utilities, and click to hear items described in more than 50 languages.

QUICK STATS

Nutrition Pays Off!—Researchers have found that every dollar spent on nutrition during the first 1,000 days of a child's life can provide a country with up to \$166 in future earnings. (*MedicalNewsToday.com*)

Parenting Values—When parents with a variety of ideological beliefs were surveyed about what they want to teach their children, these qualities came out on top:

- Responsibility (55%)
 - Hard work (42%)
 - Religious faith (30%)
 - Helping others (22%)
 - Good manners (22%)
- (*Pew Research Center*)

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.



February

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4 Wednesday. comm	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Wednesday. comm	12	13	14 Valentine's Day
15	16 President's Day	17	18 Ash Wednesday Wednesday. comm	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Wednesday. comm	26	27	28

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