

DAY 1

Love blooms

... you, being rooted and grounded in love ... (Ephesians 3:17)

Love is life's purest and most powerful motivator. It always does what is best for others and invites us to reach new heights in our relationships. Love brings fresh flavor to our living and renewed joy to our giving. Every relationship becomes more meaningful with it. No family is truly happy without it.

For this reason, love creates the richest soil in which to raise children. As flowers in a greenhouse are supplied with an ideal environment for growth, so a home filled with love provides the best context for children to flourish. Your kids should not only be the fruit of your love, but should also be deeply rooted in the nurture of your love . . . on a daily basis.

Every child is born with a lifelong thirst for love. Their hearts desperately need it like their little lungs need oxygen. It fills and energizes them. It stabilizes and secures them. Sons who grow up in loving families tend to stand taller in the day and sleep deeper in the night. Daughters rooted in love are more radiant when they rise and less fearful if they fail. Successes are amplified with celebration. Failures are minimized with tender consolation.

The love you express to your children is infinitely more valuable than any possession you could give them. You can educate them in prestigious schools, dress them in the finest clothes, guide them with the wisest rules, and boldly confront their worst fears. But if they do not rest in your unconditional love, you are neglecting a much more vital need for their true success in life.

Children come prepackaged with core questions hidden in their hearts: *Do I matter? Does anyone truly care about me? Do I have what it takes?* Dads and moms are commissioned to be God's first responders to answer these questions clearly and repeatedly over the years.

When kids are unsure if the words "I love you" apply to their hearts, they will be constantly tempted to pursue validation in their performance or in the opinions of others. Insecurities will abound. Failure will become more devastating because their sense of self-worth and identity hangs in the balance.

But what happens when a child is deeply loved by his parents over the years? His needs are more consistently met. Her dreams are faithfully encouraged. He enjoys their understanding. She is welcomed with their affection. Children like these receive instruction and protection. They're disciplined and accepted. They're assured of your patience and forgiveness, and free to share their hearts honestly without fear of overreaction. They'll even weather intense seasons of disappointment with the stability your love supplies.

What's more, when this kind of loving relationship develops between you and your child, it becomes the best environment for you to pass on your beliefs, values, faith, and heritage to them and to future generations.

Love creates a safe zone to deal with life's lessons and harsh realities. Rebuke and discipline are more palatable when seasoned with genuine love. Your children will be more likely to discern and reject the lies of others if they first receive your wise counsel within the environment of your tender affection.

The Scriptures illustrate this reality by saying to us, "We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery

of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects” (Ephesians 4:14–15).

Though these verses are speaking of spiritual growth within the church, the power of “speaking the truth in love” is also fundamental to effective parenting—to *any* relationship for that matter. Truth guides what you say while love guides how, why, and when you say it. When love is the fertile soil, truth becomes a more fruitful seed.

By working together, truth and love build deep trust between you and your child. In contrast, when parents force truth into a relationship that’s poisoned with anger, bitterness, insecurity, or emotional isolation, those truths tend to become twisted or rejected over time. Pain and misunderstanding become silent weeds that can choke out what you’re trying to communicate. Even when you speak clearly, your wise words may fall on toxic soil. This is why past hurts must always be uncovered and dealt with compassionately to gain a child’s heart and ear again.

Test yourself with these questions:

- How loving and fertile is the soil in our home?
- How much love do my children sense from me each day?
- Do the truths I share take root? Or are they ignored?
- What toxins or weeds need to be eliminated?

You may have grown up in a very loving home, and the idea of freely pouring out love on your children may come easily and naturally. Or you may have always felt a deep void of love at home, and now you long to provide what was never modeled or shared with you. In either case, we challenge you to resolve that you will be committed to establishing a strong environment of love for your children to bloom within. Purpose to begin this today.



WORDS ARE A POWERFUL WAY TO COMMUNICATE LOVE. THE FIRST DARE IS SIMPLY TO FIND A MOMENT WHEN YOU CAN VERBALLY EXPRESS LOVE TO YOUR CHILDREN. WHETHER THEY ARE IN YOUR HOUSE OR REACHABLE BY PHONE, IF IT IS POSSIBLE, MAKE SURE THEY HEAR YOU SAY THE WORDS "I LOVE YOU" TODAY.

__ Check here when you've completed today's dare.

What was the result of your interaction? Did they respond? Was this easy or difficult for you? Why are these simple words, though often taken for granted, so very important to say consistently?
