

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

ISSUE 2.2



This month, the *Dawn Treader* will be steaming on under the power of love of neighbor — which Jesus ranked alongside the greatest commandment of all. But what did He mean by love of neighbor? — that is the subject of this month's newsletter.

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR

Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children in important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

It's the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12). It's the second-greatest commandment: Love your neighbor as you love yourself (Mark 12:31). But what does it really mean to love one's neighbor, as Christ would have us love? This is probably one of the most important topics for parents to discuss with their children and be sure they understand, in the light of our society's conflicting views of love. *For week one, ask the first question over an unhurried meal. Let the children think about it and then offer their own answers. The children should talk more than the parents. Throughout the week, offer the different reasons highlighted and let the children discuss them. (Parents, read through the relevant Bible passages in advance.) Challenge the children to look up other verses addressing the question. Do the same for the following questions each week for the month.*

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Resource of the Month

Preparing Your Teens for College: Faith, Friends, Finances, and Much More: Alex Chediak with forward by Ted Tripp



Will my teens' faith be strong enough to withstand the tests of college? Will they focus on their studies or squander their free time? Will they form healthy friendships or join the wrong crowd?

Dr. Alex Chediak has watched too many college students flounder over these issues and many others. Sadly, 45 percent of those who start off at a four-year college will not complete their degree. At a time when college has never been more

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR

Week One: Why should we love our neighbor? (1 John 4:4-21, 1 Corinthians 13)

- Jesus says it is one of the greatest commandments.
- God created us to live in relationships of love, with Him and each other.
- Every person is created with a need to love and be loved; God expects us to help fulfill those needs in our work for His Kingdom.
- Love is at the root of dealing with all the problems the devil has introduced into the world.
- Human society, as a part of God's creation, cannot long survive without employing the principles of His love.

Week Two: How does Jesus want us to love our neighbor? (Luke 10:25-37)

- We are to love our neighbor as ourselves — in other words, put what they need first.
- Loving our neighbor is shown in actions of helpfulness and kindness, as in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Love is giving to others rather than thinking of what we can get from them.

Week Three: What can we do to grow in loving our neighbors? (John 15:5-17, Colossians 3:1-15)

- Ask Jesus to fill you with His love — we can never love like Him without His help!
- Listen to what people say and really get to know them.
- Always remember that the most important thing about any person is that God created them and loves them and wants them to live forever — as His children, we are to look at people from the same viewpoint.
- Pray for others.
- Think about other people as much as about yourself, helping others instead of always focusing on only your own concerns.

Week Four: Why is love of our neighbor so important? (Matthew 19:16-30, Luke 7:36-47, John 13:34-35)

- We can only understand God's love in the context of what we experience here on earth: genuine acts of love between human beings give us an example and analogy of what God's love is like.
- After God's Own Love, nothing makes life so wonderful and worthwhile as love between human beings, especially when we are enduring trials.
- "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35): loving others, even when we are not loved in return, helps us to grow in virtue and Christlikeness and the true joy that comes with drawing closer to Christ.

Resource of the Month (CONT'D)

Preparing Your Teens for College: Faith, Friends, Finances, and Much More: Alex Chediak with forward by Ted Tripp

expensive, too many of our children are failing. What makes the difference? Character, a strong faith, and a willingness to delay gratification. And where is that learned? Ideally, at home.

In this book, Alex will give you everything you need to help your teens not only successfully navigate the college years but also real life. Alex covers all the hot-button issues: dating, premarital sex, roommates, grades, career guidance, God, and much more. You won't want to be without this essential survival manual for college.

Apologist Polly Conversation Corner (CONT'D)

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: HOW DOES GOD WANT ME TO LOVE MY NEIGHBOR?

Polly: Hello, Con; how's everything?

Connie: Oh, all right, Polly; I guess.

Pol: What's wrong?

Con: Well, that girl in my class—you know who I mean; she's been causing me trouble again. It's so hard! I—I don't see how it's possible for me to love her, the way Jesus says I should, and it makes me feel guilty on top of how embarrassed and angry she makes me by her behavior. How can I possibly ever get along with her? I simply can't imagine it.

Pol: Perhaps you won't ever "get along" with her, as you say. She would have to have a real heart change to get along properly with anybody nice. Of course, Jesus can arrange that for her; but she has to let Him. And you can't control when or whether that will ever happen. Don't worry about it.

Con: But I can't help worrying. If I can't love her, does that mean I've failed as a follower of Jesus?

Pol: Well, what makes you so sure you don't love her? Just because you don't *like* her...

Con: I heartily dislike her!

Pol: Okay, I understand how you feel. But you don't have to *like* someone at all in order to love them.

Con: Wait a minute; I'm confused. I've always thought that liking someone was part of loving them: that liking was the first step, and then it might become love if something more—I'm not sure what—was added on top of it. Come to think of it, Polly, I'm not sure I really understand what "love" means at all, in a general sense. I know what I mean when I say I love my mother—I can give concrete examples. But on the whole, love seems such a vague concept.



Pol: Well, it gets treated like a very vague concept in our society today, I will grant you that. I think the biggest problem is that the main focus has shifted from "loving our neighbor" particularly, to a vague "love of humanity" in general. And, quite frankly, love is not something we do "in general"; loving someone is always particular, individual, and practical. The only way to love all of humanity is to love each one of them as an individual, and that requires far too much work and "thinking things through" to make it a popular concept in our modern world.

Con: I guess. I never thought about it that way before. But if love doesn't mean just general liking and tolerance, hyped-up with sentimentality, what does it mean? What do I have to do in order to love someone, really?

Pol: Let's start with the Bible — the best place to start. Jesus says we are to "love our neighbor as ourselves" (Matthew 22:39). To be perfectly honest with you, Connie, I used to have trouble with that definition myself. I figured that with proper Christlike love, we should really love our neighbor *more* than we love ourselves, always put their concerns before our own. And that's quite true, of course — other passages of Scripture like the Parable of the Good Samaritan and all the verses about serving others, especially Jesus washing the dis-

Apologist Polly Conversation Corner (CONT'D)

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH: HOW DOES GOD WANT ME TO LOVE MY NEIGHBOR?

principles' feet, make that very clear — but there is a particular aspect about the way we love ourselves that Jesus wants us to apply to our love for other people; it was C.S. Lewis who clarified that for me.

Con: What did he have to say about that?

Pol: That the *principles* of the love we feel toward our neighbor must be the same ones that we apply to ourselves. It's a long quote, but worth remembering; and I think I've got it here for you correctly:

Now that I come to think of it, I have not exactly got a feeling of fondness or affection for myself, and I do not even always enjoy my own society. So apparently 'Love your neighbor' does not mean 'feel fond of him' or 'find him attractive' . . . Do I think well of myself, think myself a nice chap? Well, I am afraid I sometimes do (and those are, no doubt, my worst moments) but that is not why I love myself. In fact it is the other way round: my self-love makes me think myself nice, but thinking myself nice is not why I love myself. So loving my enemies does not apparently mean thinking them nice either. That is an enormous relief. For a good many people imagine that forgiving your enemies means making out that they are really not such bad fellows after all, when it is quite plain that they are. Go a step further... I can look at some of the things I have done with horror and loathing. So apparently I am allowed to loathe and hate some of the things my enemies do. Now that I come to think of it, I remember Christian teachers telling me long ago that I must hate a bad man's actions, but not hate the bad man: or, as they would say, hate the sin but not the sinner.



For a long time I used to think this quite a silly, straw-splitting distinction: how could you hate what the man did and not hate the man? But years later it occurred to me that there was one man to whom I had been doing this all my life—namely myself. However much I might dislike my own cowardice or conceit or greed, I went on loving myself... Just because I loved myself, I was sorry to find I was the sort of man who did these things. Consequently, Christianity does not want us to reduce by one atom the hatred we feel for cruelty and treachery. We ought to hate them... But it does want us to hate them in the same way in which we hate things in ourselves: being sorry that the man should have done such things, and hoping, if it is anyway possible, that somehow, sometime, somewhere, he can be cured and made human again...¹

Con: So, perhaps the best way I can approach trying to love the people who hurt me is by hoping they will start turning into heavenly creatures? Right now, I don't feel as though I wanted to meet that girl in Heaven — if I really loved her as Jesus loves her, I would think and hope about the kind of person she *could* become, that I would want to meet in Heaven, and treat her that way?

Pol: Exactly. As C.S. Lewis explained, we must try to feel even about an enemy as we feel about ourselves —“to wish that he were not bad, to hope that he may, in this world or another, be cured: in fact, to wish his good. That is what is meant in the Bible by loving him: wishing his good, not feeling fond of him or saying he is nice when he is not. I admit that this means loving people that have nothing loveable about them. But then, has oneself anything loveable about it? You love it simply because it is yourself. God intends us to love all selves in the same way and for the same reason...”²

Ask your children: What do you think about Polly's answers to Connie's questions? Do you have any other questions of your own that this dialogue has brought up for you? Challenge them to think up more responses they could give, if someone asked them a question like Connie's.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), pp. 105-106

² *Ibid.*, p. 107-108.

Prayer of the Month

PLEASE GIVE ME A HEART TO LOVE OTHERS

The prayer for this month is mostly a meditation on 1 Corinthians 13, asking Jesus to guide us into having the sort of love described in this passage of Scripture..

Dear Lord,

Thank you for loving me enough to die for me to give me eternal life.

Please give me a heart to love others as You love them:

To be patient, kind, and thoughtful,

Not envious, or making myself out to be better than others,

Or always thinking of my own self first.

Help me to never think unkindly about anyone, or be easily annoyed,

But to forgive as I would be forgiven.

Bless all those who have been unkind to me, and help them to repent and turn to You.

Forgive me for all the unkind things I have done to others.

Make me brave, faithful, truthful, and committed to You,

Growing in Your Love always,

For that is the only thing that lasts forever:

Faith, hope, and love,

But the greatest of these is love.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen



Activity of the Month

SECRET NEIGHBOR CHALLENGE



Cover this month This month, play a special game to practice loving others as you do yourself. Each week, write down the names of every family member (or extend

the challenge to include friends and neighbors as well) on strips of paper, mix them up, and have each person in the family choose one without looking. The name on the strip selected is that person's "secret neighbor" for the week. Each day, try to do something especially kind or helpful for your neighbor, or think something nice about them in situations when you would usually get annoyed, and be sure to pray for them every night! At the next meeting, discuss what you did for your neighbors that week. How does acting in love help us to actually feel greater love towards one another?



KEEPING THE
FAITH

What is Keeping the Faith? The Keeping the Faith program is a unique study-plus-fellowship experience featuring the Aslan Academy Small Group model centered around the Keeping the Faith guidebook. It is designed to equip parents, grandparents and other caring adults for intentional discipleship of their children and teens. Dawn Treader is a monthly newsletter filled with activities and ideas geared to help you to disciple the children in your lives from preschool through the teen years. To learn more about the program, go to: www.cslewisinstitute.org/KTFResources