

(John 13:31-35)

Prologue: A Command to Love The Presswood family gathered around the table, reading John 13:31-35, where Jesus gives His disciples a powerful new commandment: to love one another as He has loved them. Ariel had been thinking about the magnitude of Jesus' words and how this command goes beyond just being kind to others—it's a call to love sacrificially and unconditionally. Alice, still holding Mr. Fluffernutter, was imagining herself sharing hugs and love with everyone around her, trying to understand how Jesus' love for His disciples could be the model for how she should love others.

"Daddy," Ariel asked, "Why is this such a big deal that Jesus is telling His disciples to love each other? Didn't they already know that?"

Ryan smiled, knowing this was an important moment to unpack the deeper significance. "That's a great question, Ariel. Yes, the command to love one another wasn't new in itself—it's something God had commanded in the Old Testament. But what made Jesus' command different was the standard He set: He wasn't just telling them to love each other in a general way. He was calling them to love as He has loved them. That means they were to love with the same sacrificial and unconditional love that Jesus showed them, and ultimately, that He would demonstrate through His death on the cross."

Ryan paused for a moment, letting the gravity of Jesus' words sink in. "You see, in the Old Testament, God commanded people to love their neighbors as themselves. But now, Jesus was raising the bar—He was asking His disciples to love as He loved. This kind of love went beyond self-preservation and called for true self-sacrifice."

Ariel's eyes widened. "So, Jesus wasn't just saying to love people in a normal way—He wanted them to love like He loves—with that kind of sacrificial love?"

"Exactly," Ryan said. "He was showing them that love isn't just about words or feelings—it's about actions. It's about giving of yourself, even when it's hard, and trusting that God will use that love to transform lives."

Ariel's gaze lingered on her journal before she looked up. "But how can we do that in our neighborhood or church? I mean, how can we show love in a way that makes people see Jesus?"

"That's a wonderful question, Ariel," Ryan replied, his tone thoughtful. "We can be a witness through love by looking for ways to serve others and show kindness, especially when it's unexpected. It could be as simple as offering to mow a neighbor's lawn, bringing a meal to someone who's sick, or even just listening when someone needs to talk."

Yaya nodded. "And in church, we can look for ways to include people who might feel left out. Maybe invite someone new to sit with us or volunteer to help with a project. It's not always about big gestures—sometimes the smallest acts of love speak the loudest."

Alice clutched Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. "Like sharing my toys or giving hugs?"

“Exactly,” Yaya said with a warm smile. “When we love others with kindness and patience, even in small ways, it reflects the love of Jesus. People notice when we care deeply, and it shows them that His love is real.”

Ryan added, “Jesus said that love would be the identifying mark of His followers. When we love like He does—sacrificially and unconditionally—it becomes a powerful testimony to the world. It’s how we show others who He is.”

Ariel scribbled in her journal, a small smile on her face. “So, loving like Jesus means thinking about what others need and doing something about it, even if it’s not easy.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “And it’s through those acts of love that people will see Him in us.””

Alice clutched Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “I think I understand. Loving like Jesus means doing something even when it’s really, really hard, because it helps someone else.”

“That’s right, Alice,” Yaya said softly. “Jesus’ love wasn’t easy, but it changed the world. And He invites us to be part of that change by loving others the way He loved us.””

The New Commandment: Love One Another (John 13:34-35) Jesus, sensing the heaviness in the room, stood and addressed His disciples with a calm yet commanding presence. His voice, steady and filled with compassion, cut through the silence. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:34-35).

“Think about His healing miracles,” Ryan said after reading. “Jesus didn’t just heal people physically; He gave them dignity and hope. Take the Samaritan woman at the well. She was an outcast, yet Jesus spoke to her with respect and offered her living water. His love crossed boundaries, and it was unconditional. That’s what He’s calling His disciples to do.”

Yaya nodded thoughtfully. “When Jesus healed the lepers, He touched them—a small but profound gesture in a world that shunned them. His love didn’t come with conditions. It wasn’t, ‘I’ll heal you if you do this for me.’ It was sacrificial, always thinking of the other person first.”

Ariel’s brow furrowed as she scribbled in her journal. “It’s really hard to love like that. I mean, what if someone is mean to you or doesn’t deserve it?”

Ryan smiled. “That’s the beauty of sacrificial love, Ariel. It’s not about whether someone deserves it. It’s about choosing to love anyway, just like Jesus does for us.” By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:34-35).

The words landed with profound impact, each syllable reverberating in the hearts of His followers. Peter, his brow furrowed, exchanged a glance with John, who sat quietly, his eyes fixed on Jesus, trying to grasp the depth of what was being said. Thomas shifted uneasily, the unspoken questions swirling in his mind. How could they possibly love as Jesus had loved? Was such a love even possible? The tension in the room seemed to crackle, yet there was also a growing sense of awe. Jesus’ words weren’t just a command; they were an invitation to a deeper understanding of God’s love and their role in reflecting it to the world. The disciples’ confusion began to give way to a quiet resolve as they grappled

with the enormity of what Jesus was asking of them. They were being called to embody a love that transcended human limits, a love that mirrored the divine.” (John 13:34-35).

Ariel was struck by the simplicity and power of Jesus’ words. “Jesus is telling them to love each other just like He loves them. That’s such a big responsibility!”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “This love is more than just words—it’s about action. Jesus is asking His disciples to love each other with the same sacrificial, unconditional love that He has shown them. And that love is supposed to be a witness to the world. When people see how Christians love each other, it should point to the love of Jesus.”

Ryan added, “The commandment to love wasn’t something completely new. The Jewish people knew the law commanded love for neighbors, but Jesus was redefining love by giving it a new depth. He was calling them to love in a way that was rooted in His example—to serve, to sacrifice, and even to love those who wrong us or those society has pushed to the margins.”

Ariel’s brow furrowed. “So, Jesus was asking them to love not just their friends and family, but also people who might have been mean to them? Or people no one else wanted to love?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Think about the Samaritan woman at the well. She was someone others looked down on, but Jesus treated her with kindness and respect. Or the lepers He healed—people avoided them, but Jesus touched them and restored their dignity. His love crossed every boundary—social, cultural, and personal.”

Yaya added thoughtfully, “And even on the cross, Jesus prayed for the people who crucified Him. He said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ That’s the kind of love He’s calling us to have—not just for the people we like, but for everyone, even those who hurt us.”

Alice tilted her head, holding Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “But why would Jesus want us to love people who are mean?”

“Because that’s how God’s love works,” Ryan explained gently. “It’s not about whether someone deserves it—it’s about reflecting God’s love for us. When we love those who are hard to love, it shows the world how powerful and unconditional His love really is.”

Ariel scribbled in her journal, then looked up. “So, if I’m kind to someone who’s mean, or help someone no one else wants to, I’m loving like Jesus?”

“Yes, exactly,” Ryan said with a smile. “And that kind of love can change hearts—it can change the world.”

“You know,” Yaya began, “this reminds me of people like Mother Teresa and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. They both showed the world what it means to love like Jesus. Mother Teresa cared for the poorest of the poor, giving up her own comfort to serve those who were suffering. And Dr. King’s dream for equality was driven by a deep love and belief that all people are created in God’s image. They showed sacrificial love in ways that changed the world.”

Ariel’s eyes widened. “Mother Teresa spent her life helping people she didn’t even know? That’s amazing.”

“And Dr. King fought for what was right even when it was dangerous,” Ryan added. “Their examples show us that loving like Jesus can make a big difference, not just in our own lives but in the world.”

Alice nodded slowly. “So, loving like Jesus isn’t just about what we do at home or school—it’s about helping everyone, even if it’s hard?”

“That’s exactly right, Alice,” Ryan said. “When we love sacrificially, even in small ways, it has the power to inspire others and make the world a better place.”

The family began to brainstorm ways they could love like Jesus in their daily lives.

Ariel looked at Alice and said with a sly smile, “Okay, Alice, let’s practice loving like Jesus. I’ll let you borrow my favorite pen for your drawings.”

Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tightly and tilted her head. “That’s nice, but I think loving like Jesus means I should share my toys, even when I don’t want to.” She hesitated, then handed Mr. Fluffernutter to Ariel. “Here, you can hold him. But be really, really careful!”

Ariel’s eyes widened as she gingerly took the stuffed bunny. “Wow, Alice, that’s a big deal. I promise I’ll be super careful.”

Ryan chuckled. “It’s great to see you both practicing sacrificial love. But remember, it’s not just about sharing things. Sometimes it’s about being patient or helping someone when they need it most.”

Yaya added with a grin, “Or forgiving each other when you don’t feel like it. Like the time Ariel got mad because Alice accidentally spilled juice on her homework.”

“That was hard,” Ariel admitted, laughing. “But I forgave her, and she helped me rewrite it.”

Alice nodded seriously. “And I was really careful not to spill juice again. That’s showing love too, right?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Love means thinking about others and doing what’s best for them, even if it’s not easy.”

The playful back-and-forth brought laughter to the room, but it also deepened the family’s understanding of what it meant to love like Jesus—even through their daily challenges and victories. “Those are all beautiful ways to love like Jesus. Loving others often requires us to step out of our comfort zones and think about what they need, even when it’s not easy for us. That’s what makes it so powerful.” “Those are all beautiful ways to love like Jesus. Loving others often requires us to step out of our comfort zones and think about what they need, even when it’s not easy for us. That’s what makes it so powerful.”

The Depth of Jesus’ Love: The Example He Set

Ariel wondered aloud, “But what kind of love is Jesus talking about? What does it look like to love like He loves us?”

Ryan paused, letting the weight of the question settle in. “Jesus’ love was sacrificial—He was willing to give up His life for us. He didn’t love from a place of convenience or comfort; He loved through sacrifice. He loved by serving others, teaching them, healing them, and ultimately dying for them. To

love like Jesus means we need to be willing to lay down our lives for others—whether that’s in small acts of service or in big sacrifices.”

Alice looked thoughtful, hugging Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “Like when I let my friend play with my favorite bunny, even though I didn’t really want to?” She glanced down at the soft, white bunny, as if imagining Mr. Fluffernutter being given a task to share love.

Alice’s eyes twinkled as her imagination took over. “What if Mr. Fluffernutter had to wash the disciples’ feet?” she said with a giggle. “He’d be so small next to them, and he’d probably fall into the water basin!”

The family laughed at the image, and Yaya added playfully, “I think Mr. Fluffernutter would do his best. He might bring a little bunny-sized towel and try his hardest to dry their feet, even if it was tricky.”

Ryan smiled warmly. “That’s a beautiful thought, Alice. Even if it’s hard or feels overwhelming, loving others is about doing your best to serve them, just like Jesus did. And sometimes, a little humor and joy, like imagining Mr. Fluffernutter helping, makes the act of love even more special.”

Alice nodded seriously, then hugged Mr. Fluffernutter close. “I think he’d try really hard to make everyone feel special, just like Jesus would.”

“What if Mr. Fluffernutter had to show sacrificial love?” Yaya asked with a playful smile. “Imagine he met another bunny who didn’t have any toys or friends. What would Mr. Fluffernutter do?”

Alice’s face brightened. “He’d share all his toys! Even his favorite carrot plush. He’d probably hug the other bunny and tell him everything would be okay.”

“That’s a wonderful way of showing love,” Yaya said. “Mr. Fluffernutter would be putting the other bunny’s happiness first, just like Jesus calls us to do.”

Ryan nodded. “Alice, that’s exactly it. Even when it’s hard or when we have to give up something we love, loving sacrificially means putting others before ourselves. That’s what Jesus did for us.”

Ryan added, “Remember when Jesus washed the disciples’ feet earlier that evening? The Son of God humbled Himself to do a job usually reserved for the lowest servant. That was a powerful act of love—showing that no act of service is too small when done with love. Loving like Jesus means showing humility and putting others first.”

“Could we try that?” Ariel asked, her eyes bright with curiosity. “Could we wash each other’s feet, like Jesus did?”

Ryan nodded, moved by her suggestion. “That’s a wonderful idea. It’ll help us understand what it means to serve others in a humble and personal way.”

The family gathered towels and a small basin of warm water. Taking turns, they gently washed one another’s feet, laughing at the ticklish moments but also reflecting on the deeper meaning behind the act. Ariel, as she washed Alice’s feet, thought about her classmate who often frustrated her. “I think I could try harder to be kind to Claire,” she said softly. “Even when it’s hard.”

Alice, holding Mr. Fluffernutter tightly, looked up at her father after her turn. “Loving like Jesus feels good,” she said, “because it makes other people feel special.”

Ryan smiled, his heart swelling with pride. “That’s exactly what Jesus wanted us to learn. Loving like Him brings joy not just to others but also to us.”

The family ended the exercise feeling closer to one another and with a deeper understanding of Jesus’ commandment. As they gathered together, Ryan encouraged them to reflect on how this call to love could shape their lives moving forward.

“This isn’t just something we do tonight,” Ryan said, his tone filled with both warmth and purpose. “Loving like Jesus is a lifelong journey. There will be times when it’s hard, but each time we choose to love sacrificially, we grow closer to Him and help others see His love through us.”

Ariel glanced at her journal and then at her family. “I think I’ll keep writing down ways I can love like Jesus. That will help me remember when it’s hard.”

“That’s a wonderful idea, Ariel,” Yaya said with a smile. “And maybe we can make it a family tradition to talk about how we’ve loved others each week. It will remind us of what really matters.”

Alice looked up, hugging Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “I think I’ll practice with Mr. Fluffernutter first, so I can get really good at it.”

The family laughed, but Ryan nodded seriously. “That’s a great start, Alice. And remember, every act of love, no matter how small, is important.”

As the evening wound down, the family sat quietly for a moment, the flickering light of the room casting a warm glow on their reflections. They felt a sense of anticipation for the days ahead, knowing that each moment would bring new opportunities to live out Jesus’ commandment and to be His hands and feet in the world.

=
=
=
=
=

Interactive Reflections

1. What are some ways you can love others sacrificially in your daily life?
2. Who is someone you find hard to love? How can you start showing them love as Jesus commands?

3. Think about Jesus washing His disciples' feet and giving His life for us. What small act of service can you do for someone today?
 4. When others look at your actions, do they see the love of Jesus in you? What could you change to reflect His love better?
-

Family Activity

The Love Jar

1. Find a jar or container and decorate it as a family with the word "LOVE" on it.
 2. Throughout the week, each family member writes down one act of love they showed or witnessed on a slip of paper and puts it in the jar.
 3. At the end of the week, read the notes together and reflect on how these acts reflect Jesus' love.
-

Image Generation Prompts

1. **The Last Supper Reflection:** Illustrate the family sitting quietly in the upper room with Jesus and His disciples, a mix of awe and reflection on their faces as Jesus speaks His commandment to love.
 2. **Steps to Love Like Jesus:** A visual flowchart with steps like "Serve," "Forgive," and "Sacrifice," accompanied by symbols like washing feet, a cross, and a heart.
 3. **Family Love in Action:** Depict a colorful scene where the Presswood family demonstrates small acts of love—Alice hugging someone, Ariel helping her sister, and Ryan comforting a neighbor.
-

Songs or Poetry

Song for Children:

*"Jesus showed us love so true,
In all He said and all He'd do.
A love that serves, a love that gives,
A love that helps all people live.

So love each other, every day,
Show Jesus' heart in all you say.
By this the world will surely see,
We are His disciples, you and me!"*

Mr. Fluffernutter's Perspective

"Mr. Fluffernutter believes loving like Jesus means sharing even your favorite things—like carrots or hugs! He thinks small acts of love make big differences. What's the best way you've shown love this week? Share your ideas with Mr. Fluffernutter!"

Ariel Reflects in Her Journal

"Today, I thought about someone who lived out Jesus' commandment—Mother Teresa. She gave up so much to help others. Her life was about love in action, just like Jesus said. It wasn't easy, but she showed us that sacrificial love can change the world. Maybe I could start small, like helping someone at school who's struggling. It's scary to think about loving like Jesus, but I want to try."

Alice Reflects with Mr. Fluffernutter

Alice sat cross-legged on the floor, holding Mr. Fluffernutter close. "You know, Fluffy, Jesus said to love everybody. I think that means even when someone's mean to me at preschool. Remember when Billy didn't share the crayons? Maybe I could share mine next time to show him love."

She paused, listening intently to her bunny's floppy ears. "What do you think? Sharing my crayons? Fluffy, you're so smart!"

Themed Crafts

Love Tokens

Materials: Cardstock, markers, scissors, ribbon, hole punch.

Instructions:

1. Cut heart shapes from cardstock.
 2. Write actions of love on each heart, like "Help someone," "Share something," or "Say kind words."
 3. Punch a hole in the top and thread a ribbon to make it wearable or hangable.
 4. Each family member selects a heart and performs that act of love during the week.
-

KJV Scripture

- **John 13:34-35:** *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*

These sections add depth and engagement, inspiring families to reflect, connect, and live out Jesus' teachings in meaningful ways.

