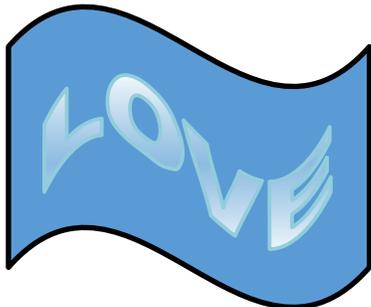


FOCUS ON LOVE:

ACTION IDEAS FOR FAMILIES OF ALL KINDS



Love Banner

A simple banner created by your teenager can be a constant reminder of how extensive God's love is. Spread a long roll of paper, roughly the size of a church aisle, on the floor. Write a bible verse pertaining to God's love like Galatians 5:22-23 in the center of the banner. Let your teen use colored markers to write several adjectives to describe God's love like "huge," "wide" or "forever" in big letters around the verse. Hang the completed banner along a church wall for others to view.

Heart Cookies

Your teen can engage in an edible craft by making and decorating heart-shaped cookies. Have her press cookie cutters in cookie dough. Bake according to instructions. Let cool. She can frost the cookies with red frosting and use a piping bag with a small tip to write on the cookies. Have her write "John 3:16" on each cookie. The cookies will serve as a sweet reminder to her that God loves the world and sent his only son to earth.



Sticky Hearts

In Deuteronomy 31:6, God shows his love by promising to never leave or forsake us in tough times. Let your teen participate in a craft to always remember he can feel God's presence. Have him cut two heart shapes from foam sheets and glue one heart to the end of a stick of gum to form a head. He can use chenille wires for the heart's arms and legs. Give him a permanent marker to write, "God Sticks With Me" on the other heart and glue to one of the arms. He can use the craft as a keepsake to remember God's promise.

Love Boxes

A teenager can show God's love by transforming an old shoebox into a gift for someone. Have him put tissue paper in the box and find or purchase food items like cans of soup and packets of tea to place in the box. Let him decorate the outside of the box with paper mache or construction paper. Have him create a small card to tape to the box's lid and write the entire verse of 1 John 4:19 inside. The verse emphasizes that we as humans love each other because God first loved us. Have him hand deliver the gift to an elderly or sick person.



Loving the Community

Show your child that loving others can also mean showing love and compassion for the less fortunate in your community. Find an age-appropriate volunteer opportunity where you and your child can give back to the community in some way or the other. Ideas include serving meals at a soup kitchen, sorting cans at a food bank, organizing a winter coat drive, or collecting toys for children that are stuck in the hospital on Christmas. Talk to your child about how it feels to show kindness and love to those who really need it.

Loving Stories

Read books with your child that emphasize love through friendship. For example, for kids ages 4 and older, the book "You: A Story of Love and Friendship," by Stephen Michael King, uses simple prose to inspire children to show love toward each other. If you want to instill the message of loving each other from a biblical point of view, check out, "Loving One Another: Beginner's Stories About Being a Good Friend," by Neta Jackson, also for ages 4 and older. The book features stories from a Christian perspective on loving one another, including Bible verses.

Love Games

Engage your child and her friend in interactive games that also reinforce the importance of friendship and love. For one game, have the kids sit in a circle and give each child a pencil and a piece of paper. They must write down 10 kind things about the person to their right as fast as they can. The person who finishes first gets to go first, but they all get to read their list and give their paper to that person. For another game, take the kids outside in a large space. Two kids are the "friendship stealers," and the others are on one side of a field and must run to the other side to safety without getting tagged by the friendship stealers. If any child gets tagged, they must remain frozen until a teammate tags them. The kids cannot get on safety without everyone, reminding them to never leave a friend or someone you love behind.

Crafting with Love

Encourage your child to show love to a friend by making a craft for her. One idea is to make a beaded friendship bracelet. Have your child use beads that are in her friend's favorite colors. She can also make a matching bracelet for her friend. Another idea is to make a friendship blossom flower to represent a new, blossoming friendship. Help your child to cut out flower petal shapes out of colored card stock. Poke a hole in the center and stick a small lollipop into the center. Your child can write a note on the petals for her friend as well.

