

Staff Work

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Love Each Other Deeply

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Love Each Other Deeply

Abstract

"I believe that the greatest thing I can do for my family is to consistently respond to the invitations of Christ."

Posting about the responsibility of raising children who love the Lord from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/love-each-other-deeply/>

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Love Each Other Deeply

 inallthings.org/love-each-other-deeply/

Jonathan De Groot

You've probably read: "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Cor 15:33). Malcolm Gladwell states in his book *Outliers*: "Who we are cannot be separated from where we're from." The book of Proverbs teaches us: "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm" (13:20). And you've certainly heard the old adage: "you are what you eat." The nature versus nurture argument isn't new and it must be acknowledged that some degree of our development is shaped by our environment. But until I became a dad, I didn't really care. Post-delivery however, I was suddenly intensely interested and haven't ceased taking inventory of my children's surroundings. Where we live, who they interact with, what they are taking in, physically, mentally, and spiritually will all somehow be processed in their little minds and bodies and eventually shape how they grow in these respective ways. Oh the pressure!

So I guess I can rule out that I'm not a *fatalistic* Calvinist. And my temptation instead is to control them, or at least their environment. If I can just regulate what they eat, who they hang out with, what they watch and how they behave then I will somehow keep them from being tainted by all the "bad" things in the world. I admit that I have judged parents who bring their underage kids to movies that make me blush and parents whose children suffer from obesity because their SUV frequents the golden arches. And I respond by clamping down harder...more rules, more discipline, more charts! This cannot end well.

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8).

I rely heavily on this ambiguous promise in scripture with regard to raising my boys. Perhaps I ought to raise the bar in my vision for parenting, but most of the time my simple prayer is: "God, just don't let me screw them up." I am certainly confident that my own depravity will make a mess of things while at the same time I am very confident that God's redemption will set things right. There are certainly obvious responsibilities that parents have in regard to raising kids, but scripture seems to purport that "the most excellent way" is love. Because of this, I believe that the greatest thing I can do for my family is to consistently respond to the invitations of Christ.

My son Griffin (5) honestly assessed at the dinner table last week: "I can't hear God's voice because I don't know what he sounds like." Me either buddy. I'm 35 and still learning what it means to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd so I felt inadequate to help. Still, I was encouraged that he grasped the notion that communication with God is a thing. And after talking about what God's voice might be like, we both volunteered to keep listening. For me, it will probably sound something like: "Stop judging parents in the movie theatre or at McDonalds." (We go to McDonalds, too – that's how I see them.)

My kids need to know that I love them. They also need to know that I love God and others. So I really, really need Christ's love in me. It's pretty amazing that the source of abundant life and unconditional love invites me to come to him every day to receive it. It's also pretty amazing how there are plenty of days when I don't. I don't want to make a mess of my marriage, my kids, my job or any other part of life. I am slowly desperate for love's work of resurrection power within me, every day. And so are my kids.