



Becky Combee Ministries, Inc.

Love Them Anyway!

February is the month we celebrate love and loving relationships. It's that special time of the year when we remember the important people in our lives and express our love and appreciation to them, especially our spouses. These words of thanksgiving include our children, our dear friends, and those who minister to us so faithfully in our churches. Everyone needs to be appreciated. So, beyond the "I love you" we reserve for that one and only person who holds our hand, we give accolades and applause to this barrage of kind and thoughtful people we can always depend upon to love us and to help us. The famous saying, "No man is an island," is true. Life is certainly a circle of friends.

In my own life, there are many people who deserve this loving applause. If I owned a business that manufactured plaques of appreciation, I would send one to each of them. Without question, I would include our precious friends in Scotland and Russia, who have always hosted us graciously. I would also wildly applaud our granddaughter who is a terrific cook, supplying us with delicious entrees and baked

goods. Then, a standing ovation for a job well done would go to our daughter, Suzanne, who runs our office with efficiency. She does so many things that I could never do. I would also remember our son who phones us regularly and meets us for hot tea after church on Wednesday night. Every mother and father loves time with their children. One more I

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would lovingly embrace is my dear sister, who is faithful to help us in many, many ways.

Beyond the "I love you" that goes to these special people, I would thank the many pastors in the United States and overseas who have allowed us to share the precious truth of God's Word in their churches and bible schools. A special note of appreciation would go to our own church and pastor who have blessed us over and over again. We would also include a unique group of ladies we call the "Fabulous Five." At the touch of a button on my phone, I can text my cry for help to them and know they will carry my need before our Father. I love

them so much! What a joy to work together for our Lord!

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Before His ascension into heaven to sit at the Father's right hand, Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment. He said, "Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you."¹ This commandment is the heart of the New Covenant, and it is interesting to note that it is not a suggestion. It is the principle of God rooted in the Greek word *agape*, which is defined as "the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty, and propriety."² This means there are no exclusions for those moments when someone "gets on your nerves," or when we simply don't feel like it. The *agape* love of God is not orchestrated by our feelings.

Sadly, our response to family and friends often rests on how we feel toward them at the moment. It follows the Greek word *phileo*, which means "to have affection for" or "personal attachment as a matter of sentiment or feeling."² *Agape* always says, "I will love you because God loves you." It is not hindered by our feelings.

Somehow, we cannot envision loving others if we believe they are unkind, unforgiving, or thoughtless. Yet, the Scripture declares that we are to, "Be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love."³ It explains the scope of God's love saying, "Christ loved us and offered His life for us as a sacrifice that pleases God."⁴ What a challenge! The love of God is a command, a decision, and a SACRIFICE.

How can we make this loving sacrifice? The apostle Paul gives us the answer when he declares that the love of God has been poured into our heart. The day we were born again, God equipped us with His love so that we could obey His command to love others as He had loved us. We know that He loved us when we were sinners and enemies, ungodly and without strength.⁵ We were not dear and loving children who sat at His feet, following His every word. We were rebellious and we were unrighteous, but He loved us anyway.

I believe that is the message of *agape*. Loudly, it

says, "LOVE THEM ANYWAY! This does not mean we will agree with them or with their actions. We are not tasked to explain away their offense and eliminate all punishment. We are not punching bags of verbal abuse or doormats of poor decisions. We are God's children with the message of heaven in our heart.

Here is heaven's message. "I will not be bitter or angry toward you. I will not spread malicious gossip about you or crucify you before my friends. I will not seek revenge or judge you. God is the judge. I will place this dilemma in His hands. Instead, I will love you, bless you and pray for you. I will be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving. I am a peacemaker, and although I may not condone your behavior, I will bring you the message of God's love and mercy."

This is the way of love. It is God's way when our spouse forgets to bring home that very important ingredient for our casserole. It's God's way when the television is too loud and the homework has not been done. When the conversation is too long, unsettling our heart, love is still God's way. It controls our words when a crazy driver slows our trip home. When the neighbor backs into our fence, God's love dominates our response. In every situation, we are God's vessels of love, demonstrating the unconditional mercy and grace He provides for all people.

Everyone should be touched by the love of God working in our lives. Even those we consider incorrigible should see the supernatural power of our risen Lord and His love in us. Yet, only as we surrender to Him is this possible. He enables us to love all men. He empowers us so that we can LOVE THEM ANYWAY. Yes, all of them.

God's love is greater than a mutual admiration society. It's much larger than, "I love you and you love me." It is so very grand that it declares, "Love your enemy." This does not mean that I will agree with them. It means they will see God's love through my life.

God's love always says, "God loves you and so do I."



¹Jn 13:34 NCV ²Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, G5368

³Eph 5:1 NKJ ⁴Eph 5:2 CEV ⁵Rm 5:6-10