

RADICAL LOVE

[In the Garden of Eden] eating the fruit offered a chance to become autonomous — independent from God — but would also be an unfaithful rejection of the loving relationship with Him. The essence of sin is choosing self-rule over surrender to the rule of our Creator. This is a relational rejection.

— Debbie Swindoll

At the heart of every spiritual practice is the opportunity to come closer relationally, to experience intertwined nearness with God. Believe it or not, the practice of submission can bring us into a place to experience this abundant oneness with God. **Let's dare to revisit the submission demonstrated by Jesus and what we are invited to enjoy.**

Because the word "submission" has been misused so much, we need to listen carefully to hear exactly what God is offering us — and our children.

Submission is not about accommodating abusive power or selfish control. Submission cannot be demanded from someone else; it is a gift we each offer back to God and to others. Jesus submitted to the will of the Heavenly Father and came to earth out of love for God — and for us. He calls us into a submissive relationship with him and with others.

Romans 12:10 (CSB) beautifully summarizes the invitation into submission: **Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.** That invitation has no age limit. Adults and children alike are invited into the joy of loving others radically.

Submission is about loving deeply and devotedly. Submission is outdoing one another to show honor and esteem. It's about taking delight in giving preference to the other person. Not reluctantly or under compulsion, but eagerly. **It's about actively taking the lead and excelling in yielding to one another.** It's about pushing your way to the back of the line. It's wanting to be the best at saying, "Don't worry about me, take care of them first." That's why we call it Radical Love.

How can we ever have a "you go first" love for others? We must be continuously soaked in the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. We must remind ourselves that we have been lifted out of last place by his limitless love. When his love is right in front of me, then I will be more likely to show radical love to others. Submission impacts our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships.

How can we ever nurture that radical love in the hearts of children? By creating space for them to meet with God so that they know his love. Then the Spirit of God will transform them, just as he is transforming us. Imagine how different the world can be when the parents, teachers, church leaders, business leaders, and political leaders are people who have had a life-long habit of out-loving others.

Start the conversation with your child!

"Come and sit with me a minute. Let's talk about loving others the way God has loved us."



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INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

(Make a "Love BIG" chart of 5 rows and 5 columns labeled: L-O-V-E-BIG and a big paper heart labeled "God's love is BIG.") God's love is SO big that when your heart is full of it, it overflows to make other hearts happy, too.

In each of these squares is the picture (or name) of someone who loves you. Some people are in more than one place. Every time you show God's love to one of those people, you get to put a heart on his/her square. Sometimes God will ask you to show love by letting the other person have their turn first or giving them the biggest piece or sharing your favorite thing. God will help you show them that their happy heart is more important than your happy heart.

Every time you fill up a whole line with hearts, you get to wear this paper heart to remind you that showing God's love to others is wonderful. Now it's time to ask God who should be the first one you are going to give his love to.

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

(Make a Badge of Honor from ribbon or a piece of paper.) Jesus left his place of honor in heaven so that we could experience his love. And the Bible tells us that we will experience God's love when we pass along his love to others more often than we receive love from them. So, we are going to see what happens when we give others first place, like Jesus did.

We are going to see how many times we can pass this Badge of Honor around our family today. I wanted to wear it first, but I'm going to show love to you by letting you go first. Then you watch for a chance to let someone else have their way and you give it to them. Every time we pass it to a different person, we will draw a gold star on the badge. At the end of the day we will see how many times we have passed it around. And we will know how easy or how hard it is to out-love each other.

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

Once a little brother watched as his big brother divided a piece of cake for them to share. Little brother said, "You know, if you were like Jesus, you would just let me have the biggest half." The big brother thought about that and then he said, "I think I will let you be like Jesus today." (Laughter opens the heart of a child for relationship and learning.)

Read Romans 12:10 to me and tell me how that might change the big brother's answer. *Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.* Out-loving is radical. Radical love, sometimes called submission, means we willingly devote ourselves to what is good for someone else.

Ask God which of these "one another" verses he wants you to focus on and who he wants you to show love to. Then record in your journal what happened and how it felt for God to help you love others radically. Galatians 5:13 or 6:2; Ephesians 4:2, 4:32, or 5:19; Colossians 3:9, 3:13, or 3:16.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Do You Love Me? An Exploration of Our Relationship with God and Others, by Debbie Swindoll