

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH A LIFESTYLE OF LOVE

by Amy Russell Psy.D.

First John 3:1 says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" I heard a recent sermon using this verse and the pastor emphasized that "Yes, I am a child of God, but I am not an **only** child." Another reminder that loving God and being loved by God are intrinsically linked with loving one another. Beth Moore in her book *Believing God* states that we not only live by faith as believers, but we **love** by faith. Living a life of love is a lifestyle.

Ephesians 5:1-2 says "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Sometimes this is easy, like when we look at the adorable aspects of our children and stand in awe of how God could ever have given us this gift. Sometimes this is an unbelievably difficult task, like when our children are mouthy or wake us up in the night and we want them to act differently. Sometimes we just want others (our children, spouses, friends, coworkers, you name it) to be different, and we have no power to change them.

Rich Mullins, in his song *My Brother's Keeper*, said "My friends aren't the way I wish they were, they are just the way they are." I often find myself repeating this line when I want my way, when I want people to be more like I want them to be, when I don't feel like loving them. Praise God that He does not ever stop feeling like loving us! That is not His nature. God is love. That means it comes naturally to Him. I love that because, honestly, I don't know that it will ever truly come naturally to me to love people. I will say, however, that the more I am in His word, putting myself in places where I hear His truth, submitting to His will and His ways rather than my own selfish desires, the more it comes naturally to love others.

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). May we go into our world and love others, even when it is hard. May God equip you with whatever you need today to grasp how great His love is for you, and whatever you need to love every person you encounter on today's journey.