

Loving Your Children When You Want to Scream

I love my kids. I love spending time with them, and I love being a stay-at-home mom.

But sometimes ... I find myself wishing.

I wish ... he would be more interested in using the potty.

I wish ... she would stop deconstructing the house every time I turn around.

I wish ... he would stop whining.

I wish ... she wouldn't argue.

I wish ... they would let me have an entire phone conversation without interrupting.

I wish ... they would eat what I put in front of them—without complaining.

I wish ... I wish ... I wish ...

Do you have wishes, too? Do you, like me, earnestly wish some things about your child or his or her behavior were different? Are you, like me, working very hard in some areas to help bring about the day when the behavior is put aside, or outgrown?

Oh, we think, when she stops doing this, life will be so much easier. Or, if he would just start doing that...

There's nothing wrong with looking toward the future. In fact, as mothers, we must look toward the future. We need a perspective that says that this too shall pass. We need a perspective that helps us realize what is truly important, and what isn't. We need an eternal perspective that reminds us of

what will be important 10, or 20, years from now, and what will be forgotten.

But let's not focus so hard on changing our children's behavior in the future that we forget to love them in the present.

Yes, our children will probably be a lot easier to deal with once a particular behavior is under control.

But this doesn't mean our children will be any easier to love in the future.

Easier to get along with? Maybe.

But not easier to love.

You see, if we find it easier to love our children once their behavior changes, it reveals that our love has been performance-based.

Saying we might be able to love our children more at some point in the future, once they begin or cease doing something, is the same thing as saying that our love is based on their performance, not on their intrinsic worth as a marvelous creation of God and our precious child.

What you and I must remember is that love is not simply a feeling of comfort with someone. It is not mere approval. It is not even necessarily warm and fuzzy.

Love is action. It is a choice. It is a choice that can be made in any situation, even right now.

No, I don't know how your children are behaving. But I do know they deserve your love. Right now. As they are. They need to know that they are loved and accepted, no matter how imperfect they are.

It doesn't mean you always have to accept their actions, their

attitudes, or their words. It means you always accept them.

Aren't you glad that God didn't wait until our behavior was perfect before accepting us?

Scripture gives us the incredible truth that God loved us and accepted us completely from the very beginning.

Did he accept our sin? Of course not. But even while we were still sinners, God sent his son Jesus to die for us.

God didn't wait until we were holy before he extended love, grace, and acceptance to us. He didn't wait until we had reached some level of perfection. He didn't even wait until we had stopped doing certain things, or started doing others.

Instead, He loved us from the beginning.

Yes, part of his love means that he disciplines us, just as part of your love for your children means that you will discipline them and try to turn them from ways they shouldn't go.

But make sure your children know deep in their souls that no matter what they do or fail to do, you love them, and God loves them. Not in the future, but right now.

And not just a little, but with all your might.

After all, God has done the same for you.

Romans 5:8—But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

*Adapted from **Megan Breedlove's** blog, *Manna for Moms*. Megan is the author of *Well Done, Good and Faithful Mommy* and *Manna for Moms: God's Provision for Your Hair-Raising, Miracle-Filled Mothering Adventure* (Regal Books.) She is also a blogger and a stay-at-home mom with five children.*