

## **The One Another Commands in the New Testament**

Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10).

"Live in harmony with one another" (Romans 12:16).

"Stop passing judgment on one another" (Romans 14:13).

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you" (Romans 15:7).

"Agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

"Serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

"Bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2).

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

"Be kind and compassionate to one another" (Ephesians 4:32).

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19).

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16).

"Encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

"Spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

"Do not speak against one another" (James 4:11 NASB).

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

"Love one another deeply, from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

"be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted" (1 Peter 3:8 NKJV)

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9).

"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" (1 Peter 5:5).

"Greet one another" (1 Peter 5:14)

## Quotes from adoptive moms on how the church can better understand and support the journey

‘some of our kids struggle with appropriate touch with themselves, other kids and even teachers. They sometimes need redirection (but it doesn’t mean there is something WRONG with them). Most adults want to be affectionate with our kiddos out of compassion and yet this is often NOT good for the child who is still learning proper attachment.’

‘For the most part, our culture has no clue about what is going on at a deeper level for adoptive families, and sadly, many people don’t bother to find out before passing judgment, gossip, advice, etc. ... enjoyment of church and community for adoptive families is a tricky balance...Adoptive parents can’t – and shouldn’t – defend themselves by giving everyone all the gory details of their child’s story and needs...We would love to let our guard down but we’ve seen the consequences’

‘One thing I’ve observed and experienced on this journey is loneliness. [Sharing deep struggles with] a friend is tough, because, “Well (shrug), you signed up for this.” That’s like lecturing a friend on “signing up” for the side effects of chemotherapy. The path is tiresome, but worth it, and we still appreciate dear friends who bear the burden alongside us.’

‘I am so thankful for the people who understand this is challenging ... I really appreciate the ones who look at me and quietly say, “What you’re doing is not easy, but you’re doing a good job.” Such simple words are like balm to my soul’

‘Finding a church that we can be a part of has been excruciating. We actually quit going for a few years. Nobody at church knew what to say to us. We did get ... “You have to be careful adopting someone else’s kids with spiritual darkness attached to them,” or something along those lines from a handful of people. When we were at the hospital for open-heart surgery, we didn’t have a single person from church ... offer to help with our other children or bring a meal’

‘Delivered meals during hard seasons are a huge blessing for adoptive families, regardless of how long the child has lived with them. Our friends, family, and church encouraged us with their advocacy, kind words, boundaries, prayer, gift cards ... after a quick call on the cell phone to check in first, two of our closest friends came by with a latte, flowers, and hug... I just remember how they stood on the porch with me while I cried ... They listened ... again, and loved me. Again.’

‘I wish that people understood the logistics that are involved with managing our daily life or in going to activities that other families take for granted ... If the invitation [to an event for this mom] included “I’ll help you with getting everyone fed” or “don’t worry about getting to and from the car, we’ll help”...then I would have been much more likely to accept’  
(most of above from Shannon Guerra, *Upside Down: Understanding and Supporting Attachment in Families*)

## How can you help wrap around adoptive families (condensed from Focus on the Family booklet)

**Adoptive families need your help.** Many adoptive families desperately need support from their church families. As is often the case in other areas of life, however, asking for help can be difficult to do. Many adoptive families may interpret their struggles as failure, question their calling to adopt or, worst of all, feel abandoned ... Struggling adoptive families need their church families to wrap around and support them during times of trials. When churches do this, they mirror our heavenly Father, who wraps His arms around us during times of joy as well as times of trial. While the suggestions here may not apply to all situations, they represent a general “cry of the heart” of adoptive families who welcomed home an emotionally wounded or struggling child. The goal is to provide practical guidance for churches seeking to support

**First things first.** Before trying to provide support to a family in need, it is vitally important for pastors and church members to understand that children who experienced previous trauma may have a difficult time adjusting to their new adoptive family – no matter how committed and loving the family may be. Understanding this is vital for effective ministry. Healing for these children doesn’t usually happen overnight, and adoptive families need their church families to walk with them through their struggles. Churches can no longer think that typical parental expressions of love alone will “cure” the child. For many of these children, their souls are scarred and their hearts are hurt. As a result, time, understanding and unconditional commitment are essential to the child’s healing process. It’s also wise to remember that the last thing adoptive parents need is simplistic answers from people who understand nothing of their unique calling and struggle. These parents do not need admonitions that they are either too hard on little cutie-pie or not firm enough with that strong-willed child. This approach will alienate the already struggling family. The emphasis for all involved cannot be on a quick fix for the children. Rather, with time and God’s grace, we can slowly help these children heal.

**How do we wrap around our adoptive families?** Families struggling in these situations need compassionate, non-judgmental brothers and sisters in Christ to walk beside them to help bear their burdens ... an easy way to remember:

<b>W.R.A.P.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>A.</b>	<b>P.</b>
	Wrestle in prayer	Respite care	Acts of service	Promises of God

**Wrestle in prayer.** The spiritual warfare involved in rescuing orphans is very real and often overlooked. Adoptive families need you to wrestle in prayer on their behalf. Pray for strength, patience, grace and mercy. Pray for God's truth to be revealed to the families amid the schemes and lies, for spiritual eyes to see the truth behind their struggle and strength to exercise their faith and trust in their mighty God who will walk them through their trials. Pray for the child:

- That God would heal wounds of rejection, abandonment, fear and mistrust.
- That God's love, which never fails, will cover him in all he does.
- To know and believe hope in Christ. To trust in and receive her new family's love and desire to help her heal.
- Seek out a group of believers who will commit to pray regularly.
- Communicate to the family that [you] would count it a privilege to intercede on their behalf. (James 5:16)
- Ask the family for specific prayer requests and assure them those requests will be held in the strictest confidence.
- PRAY . . . FERVENTLY and OFTEN. Let the family know you're praying for them regularly. For the struggling adoptive family, prayer will help move them toward wholeness and healing in Christ.

**Respite care.** No matter how wonderful, committed and loving adoptive parents are, they need a break from the demands of caring for their children ... For adoptive parents who struggle with challenging children, respite care is crucial to the well-being of the family ... to focus on their marriage, take time to regroup, and enjoy much-needed peace, quiet and rest. If possible, provide respite in the children's home in order to maintain as much of the structure and schedule as possible.

**Acts of service.** One of the keys to effective acts of service is that they are offered enthusiastically, in a spirit of love and are specifically designed to meet the needs of the family. Being aware of the dynamics of adoptive families and children will aid in identifying needs that can most easily be met. Another key to effective acts of service is to make the offer as low maintenance as possible for the adoptive parents. However kindly intended, if the offer creates additional stress or work for the parents, it will be counterproductive ... This list of ideas will help get you started.

- Meals, Laundry, Cleaning, Yard Work, Errands, Financial help, etc. Don't say, "Let me know if you need anything," because you'll likely never be asked. Instead, tell them you're going to the store that week and ask if they have time to give you a list.
- Cleaning. Housework can take away a good deal of the family's bonding time. Identify a time when the family will be out of the house and offer to vacuum, clean bathrooms, or wash linens and remake beds. This may be difficult for a family to accept at first, so give them the opportunity to decline the offer without feeling pressured.
- Financial assistance. Gifts for the homecoming celebration (like baby showers for families expanding by birth)
- Make it a point to really consider the many ways you might bless an adoptive family. The options are limitless!
- Again, paying attention to the family's needs is important. When serving the family, be sensitive to the amount of time you stay to visit ... The new child needs calm and quiet time to bond with mom, dad and any siblings.

### **Promises of God**

Throughout Scripture, God makes many promises that can encourage us during the different seasons of our lives. His Word is living and active, but His powerful truths sometimes get lost amid pain and struggle. Providing encouragement with God's Word through notes, calls or e-mails can be a powerful source of comfort and strength for families. Hope-filled words combined with listening ears, understanding hearts, kindness and mercy will deeply resonate.

-*Who is our God? He is strong and mighty. He is more than able. Keep your eyes on Him.* Promise examples: Psalm 9:9, 46:1-3, 10:11, 68:5-6, 121:7-8, 147:5, 147:3, Isaiah 30:18, Jeremiah 32:37, Philippians 4:19, Revelation 17:14, 22:13

-*My focus is on God—now what do I do?* 2 Corinthians 4:18, Proverbs 3:5-6, Psalm 13:5, 50:15, 125:1, James 4:8, Isaiah 58:9, Galatians 6:9, Romans 5:3-4, Job 11:18

- *Fear Not.* 1 John 4:18, 2 Timothy 1:7

- *Jesus is the answer.* Isaiah 61:1-3

Take action

- Buy a box of cards and periodically send them an encouraging note.
- Even writing out prayers for the family can be a huge blessing.
- Take time to explore how the Lord may be asking you to serve. Often it's the small gestures that mean the most.

## **What the Church Should Consider (from Shari McMinn, *Adoption: Encouragement and Advice*)**

It is important to discuss how a modern church can truly support adoption as a congregation-wide ministry. Adoptive families have additional issues to those typically found within a biological-only family. Just as step and blended marriage families might have different issues which need to be addressed from time-to-time, so do adoptive families. Church leaders and members who are attentive, but not interfering, will go a long way to support and practically help adoptive families in their congregation. The most important way that churches can help adoptive families is to pray for peace and harmony. Next most important is to simply ask “How can we help?” Listen attentively ... They may need to opt out of many programs, be involved in a modified way, and do so without feeling, or being made to feel guilty ... Well-meaning actions by others outside an adoptive family can easily be contrary to what the adoptive children need’ (chap. 71)

## **Excerpts from Brian Borgman’s book, *After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption***

I have talked to many couples who began their adoption journeys with great anticipation and excitement, only to be met with behavioral and emotional issues that quickly moved them out of their depth. Every one of these couples went from feeling hopeful as parents to feeling hopeless. And often what makes this sense of hopelessness especially unbearable is feeling unsupported or misunderstood by the local and larger Christian community ... My wife and I have been there and we know of many other adoptive parents who have as well. To these parents the shared experiences are familiar and the hurt, isolation, and sense of shame are real ... I have heard many stories from discouraged adoptive parents who have received all kinds of advice and criticism that was completely lacking sympathy and understanding. It’s not difficult to find self-appointed experts offering a broad range of input that features easy answers from a black-and-white perspective. Some people seem to think that, whatever your challenges, it’s probably a lot like a lawnmower that won’t start: a quick diagnosis and a little tinkering are probably all you need to get everything humming again, so what’s the big deal? ... Many adoptive parents I talk to – and I talk to many – often feel misunderstood by family and friends. They frequently feel judged ... often think they are bad parents, ineffective disciplinarians, or even failures. They can feel hopeless, not to mention isolated from and unsupported by the very community that ought to understand (p. 9, 16-17, 98)

## **Linda Rice, *Parenting the Difficult Child: A Biblical Perspective on Reactive-Attachment Disorder***

If you are a friend, pastor, or counselor of the parent or sibling of an [RAD-diagnosed] child, pray for the family. Think biblically before you speak. Support the weak and correct with gentle grace...and compassion to others (p. 279-80).

## **Welcoming Families in the Messiness, By Robin Pennington (Hope for Orphans blog 8/29/17)**

If we had a contest for “Epic Parenting Embarrassments” I might win. How about a 5th-grade son who was headed to Children’s Church with his class and decided the electrical breaker box looked interesting, pulling the switch that shut off the lights to the entire sanctuary during the middle of the worship service and leaving a couple thousand folks sitting in the dark?... Parenting is hard and humbling, and we all need a church community to help us and point us to God. But sometimes the parents who most need their church’s care feel unwelcome at church. How does it feel to be that parent who has a biological, adopted, or foster child with special needs who is not easy to care for day in and day out? ... How does your church respond to families who have children with differences? By differences, I mean children who have unique needs due to physical differences, mental delays, learning issues, fetal alcohol, Autism Spectrum, sensory issues, congenital differences, a history of abuse or neglect, and the multitude of chronic health problems that plague so many sweet kiddos. Does your church embrace these families or do they feel ill prepared to deal with the unique needs involved in showing these children the love and acceptance of Jesus through the local church body? ... will that family feel judged because their child may not have normal responses or fit in the normal child channel of planning? Fortunately there are churches that are planning intentionally for how to meet the needs of families with kids with special needs. They are getting gospel driven training for how to love kids from neglect, abuse and physical challenges. The impact on the family when the church embraces these families and their children is profound ... take steps to make your church the kind of safe church that will draw hurting and exhausted families into the fold of grace and acceptance [she gives a positive personal example of children’s ministry director who said to a parent of a child with sensory issues: ‘we want to be able to work with you. We want you to know that we want you here and we want your child here and this is a safe place’]