

# HomeWord

Vol. 4, No. 12 A newsletter dedicated to household harmony & family faith

## In This Issue

More than any other virtue, love is the one God wants us to practice. In this issue we explore some of the attitudes and skills needed to love one another. Because we're human, love inevitably gets complicated and messy. Sometimes we fail to love as we should, but forgiveness and reconciliation go hand in hand with nurturing our loving relationships.

In the lead article, **Ken Potts** shows us the importance of nurturing the ones we love, and allowing them to nurture us. We welcome Ken Potts as a new *HomeWord* author. He is a marriage and family counselor in Darien, Illinois. In the second article, **Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart** offers a story that shows all the complications of trying to love the ones we live with even when they make costly mistakes.

One of my best friends massages my shoulders when he senses my frustration or anxiety. My youngest sister will give me a hug and whisper an "I love you" when she senses that I'm troubled or in pain. My teenage daughter will suggest that she drive when she senses I'm particularly tired.

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## Make It All Better

by Ken Potts

"Make it all better?" my two-year-old pleaded, crawling up into my lap after her latest bout of knee scraping. And I did. Not that I miraculously healed her wound—it would take some Bactine, a few bandages, and a little time to do that. I just held her close, rocked her back and forth a bit, whispered a word of comfort into her ear, and wiped the tears and accumulated grime from her face. That was enough.

Good clinical research suggests that such emotional "medicine" plays a large part in our recovery from any wounds—physical, emotional, or spiritual. We feel less pain when someone is there to speak a caring word, hold our hand, or wipe away our tears. Studies show that even persons suffering from severe physical trauma or illness suffer less pain if medical treatment is accompanied by emotionally sensitive care.

We parents teach our children this. My daughter learned the phrase "make it all better" from me—this is the phrase I use when I try to comfort her in her various daily mishaps and crises. Of course, as she gets older she will have to learn that not even Dad can make it all better. In fact, we parents often can't make things much better at all. We can, however, stand by our children's side and continue to offer them the caring that makes life hurt a little less.

We can also do that for one another. Somehow we adults seem to have lost track of that basic truth. Those of us who were fortunate learned it as children while sitting on the laps of our own parents. And most of us have tried to pass it on to our own children. Yet we seldom give such caring to the men and women—spouses, parents, friends, coworkers—we encounter on a daily basis in our "grown-up" lives.



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## A Lesson to Remember

by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart

It was the weekend between Christmas and New Year's, when the Catholic church celebrates the feast of the Holy Family. Maggie knew that, and she also knew what the second reading would be at Sunday's Mass—Saint Paul telling children to obey their parents, and warning parents not to nag their children. She didn't want her sons smirking at her upon hearing those words, so she was determined not to nag all weekend. For instance, she noticed that the car keys were not hung up on the kitchen hook. Did she nag? Nope. She didn't say a word. She noticed the new cordless phone was not hung up on its cradle. Did she nag? Nope. These things would just have to get worked out on their own, she thought.

Mass that Sunday was relatively uneventful. No smirking. Maggie and Tom's oldest son, Philip, wasn't there. He was home from college and had to work that morning at the Pancake House. He needed the money and would work any shift he could get. So it was just Maggie, Tom, and their youngest son, Sean.

After Mass they walked into their house, and suddenly Tom ran into the kitchen and picked up the phone. "It's not working!" he exclaimed. Sean ran

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## Attitudes of Love

by Ken Potts

Not too surprisingly, when it comes to our relationships, attitudes are important. We must have certain attitudes to support the love we offer others.

- **Courage.** To love another person is a risk; it means reaching out and giving of ourselves. When we do so, we risk frustration, rejection, failure, and pain. There are no guarantees in loving, whether our love is fresh and untried or comfortable and tested by time. To risk loving, then, we have to have the attitude of courage.
- **Persistence.** Loving is hard work. We often forget that. Love is not so much found in the initial investment of ourselves in another person, as it is in our willingness to stick with it, even when there are no immediate payoffs.
- **Trust.** We must choose to believe that the person we love will accept our love, value it, treat it respectfully, and give love back. And we need to be trusting even when we have little or no experience with the person we love.
- **Forgiveness.** To be able to understand, accept, and forgive another person's failings, even when we are hurt by them, is one of the most important attitudes we must develop to love successfully. We can choose to forgive, or we can choose to store up our pain, allowing it to destroy our love.
- **Holding on and letting go.** To love another, finally, means to be willing to be intimate when our loved one needs it and asks for it. But at the same time, we must be willing to let this person be when he or she needs space. To love is not to clutch or cling to, nor is it to push away. Love involves an attitude of allowing both closeness and distance as a healthy part of relating.

(*"Make It All Better," continued from page 1*)

I used to resist such caretaking. I thought that as a grown man, I ought to be able to take care of myself. Then I realized I was teaching my children and my counseling clients just the opposite. So I started listening to my own advice and letting other people comfort me every now and then.

I can't say that I now have fewer problems or even that I solve them more easily. I simply hurt a little less when I let the people who care about me do just that—care. Oh, I know, it won't really "make it *all* better," but friends, it sure does make it a *little* better.

(*"A Lesson to Remember," continued from page 1*)

downstairs to check the other phones. Maggie, holding a piece of paper, asked what was going on. "This note from Philip . . . It says, 'No car keys, phone dead, will try to catch a bus to work.' Catch a bus? Has he ever taken a city bus before? How does he know which bus runs where and when?" she asked in a panic.

Tom shrugged. "Philip left for college right after we moved here. He never took a bus anywhere. He doesn't know his way around the city. I can't imagine what he did."

Suddenly Sean emerged from the basement looking guilty and sheepish. "It's all my fault," he volunteered. "I had the keys in my pocket all morning. I forgot to hang them up last night. And I never turned the new phone off. I should have just hung it up on the wall like I'm supposed to. The phone's not dead. It was just off the hook."

He collapsed into a chair, disgusted with himself. "I think I'll call Philip and apologize. I could pay him back for the bus fare and for the time he missed at work. I wonder how late he was."

Tom handed him the phone. Sean called the Pancake House and asked for Philip. Their conversation lasted ten minutes, Sean's side full of apologies. After he hung up, he told his dad the details. Maggie heard the whole story.

Poor Philip. Someone told him which bus to take, but he had to wait at the bus stop for almost an hour before the bus came. Then it was another twenty minutes before he arrived at work. He was an hour and a half late. They put him on "notice," which meant he would be fired if he slipped up again.

Poor Sean. He felt sick over this. He knew money could never make it up to his brother. He started to write Philip an apology card.

Poor Maggie. All she kept thinking was, Why did I ever listen to Saint Paul? What does he know? He never had any kids! See what happens when parents don't nag? I should have asked about the keys. I should have told someone to find the phone and hang it up. When Philip comes home, there's going to be a huge fight. I don't blame him. If I had to take a bus because of Sean's forgetfulness, he'd be grounded for two weeks!

She waited all day for Philip to come home and have it out with his brother. But it never happened. By the time Tom picked him up and brought him home, Philip was quite calm. Sean greeted him at the door whimpering: "I'm so sorry, Philip. It was all my fault. I'm so sorry."

Maggie was surprised at Philip's response. "I was mad earlier, but not anymore. I know you didn't do it on purpose. I forget things too. If I stay mad at you, I'll only hurt myself. It's over, and it can't be undone, so why sulk and stay mad? Let's just forget about it."

She was proud and amazed. When did he grow up and become so reasonable? What happened to the two brothers who used to beat up on one another until blood and tears were flowing freely? How could he forgive so easily? Where did he learn that?

Maggie kept thinking about what her own response would have been: "You're grounded for two weeks!" She knew that as a parent she still had a lot to learn about patience and forgiveness. This time she had the honor of learning from her children.

Following Philip's example, she decided to forgive Saint Paul. She reasoned, If I stay mad at him, I'll only hurt myself. So why sulk and stay mad? But she didn't forget about it. This was a lesson she wanted to remember.





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Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to enclose the latest issue of *HomeWord*.

More than any other virtue, love is the one God wants us to practice. In this issue we explore some of the attitudes and skills needed to love one another. Because we're human, love inevitably gets complicated and messy. Sometimes we fail to love as we should, but forgiveness and reconciliation go hand in hand with nurturing our loving relationships.

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As you know, you are encouraged to copy this *HomeWord* issue and make it available to all the families in your parish or school. If you have any questions or comments about *HomeWord*, don't hesitate to drop me a line.

Sincerely,

Leif Kehrwald  
*HomeWord* Editor



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