

# Ways to love one another (John 13:31-35)

**Turns out there are a lot of them.**

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“Where heaven and earth meet” is the tagline on the logo of my favorite faith-based youth camp, where I serve every summer as resident theologian. That tagline is less about geography or location and more about a vision for the kind of community that forms and re-forms there.

My role among fellow earthly folk is to prepare the summer staff for their roles as leaders of Discovery Time (Bible study) for the campers. Most of the summer staff are young adults—recent high school graduates or college students—with a commitment to living in an inclusive Christian community and a passion for working with youth, but with varying levels of church participation or knowledge of the Bible.

When they arrive at camp a few can recite details of key biblical events—the creation, the exodus from Egypt, one or more of Jesus’ parables—while others need help finding the book of Genesis. By the end of staff training, however, each one is writing activity plans to help campers dig into the daily Bible passages, complete with games to introduce the theme, discussion questions that dig deeper, crafts for hands-on experience, and devotional activities to support faith formation.

They are, in any case, a wise and wonderful bunch.

In one of our discussions a couple of years ago we considered the ways that Jesus embodies God's love in the Gospel of John, especially Jesus' commandment to "love one another just as I have loved you." We imagined what it might look like for campers (and staff) to live into that commandment while at camp. Large pieces of newsprint scribbled with markers kept track of the staff's insights, to be captured later by my cell phone camera.

One photo in my collection shows a slightly rumpled newsprint with the heading, "Acts of Love at Camp." Below the heading is a list of ways to love one another as Jesus loves us, based on biblical examples:

- Let others go first in the dining hall (Jesus feeds the multitudes)
- Invite others to join you (Jesus welcomes all kinds of people)
- Don't make fun of people who ask questions (Nicodemus)
- Encourage others when the challenges are hard (Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit)
- Make a friendship bracelet for someone, especially if they don't have a friend at camp (Jesus talks with the woman at the well)
- Offer help even before you're asked (Jesus heals the man at the pool of Bethzatha)
- Remind your friend to bring a water bottle (Jesus is the living water)
- Share your bug spray (Jesus would share his, if he had it!)

It turns out there are many ways, large and small, for us to love one another as Jesus loves us. Many ways, large and small, for heaven and earth to meet.