

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Today's chapter from Mark strikes to the heart of the "family values" debate that is tearing apart our civil society and our churches. Asked his opinion of divorce, Jesus reminds us of God's design in creation: we are made male and female in the image of God. We are to form lifelong bonds of love. And in the next paragraph, Mark describes Jesus welcoming and blessing children.

In the patriarchal culture in which Jesus lived, divorce could be initiated only by the husband, and it left the wife without status, social protection, or economic support. This grave injustice toward women, Jesus points out, reflects "hardness of heart," and deserves condemnation. In a different culture, the justice equation may compute differently. Most Christians in our culture now believe that divorce, however sad, is better than remaining in an abusive relationship or one in which caring and trust have been violated or lost.

What of "God made them male and female"—the issue that now consumes so much ink, and so much time and energy? What would Jesus do? What would Jesus say? There are honest and wrenching differences of opinion here, as well as much shallow prejudice on both sides, and much cynical manipulation of the issue for the sake of power and political gain.

What we do know, if we read the Gospels with an open mind and an open heart, is that Jesus consistently took the part of the powerless, the outcast, the marginalized, the "unclean." He set far more store on justice than on purity, and more store on love than on justice. We who, in baptism, have turned to him as our savior, put our whole trust in his grace and love, and promised to obey and follow him as our Lord, would do well to bear this well in mind.

The social structures through which we enact our response to Jesus' love may change. What does not change is Jesus' love itself. Look at your child's drawing of a "loving family" on the back of this page. Does it resemble your family, or is it a wishful fantasy? Help your child to share his or her feelings about how well your family reflects Jesus' love for us. Pray together for the grace to reflect that love more truly.

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Jesus said, "Let the children come to me.
To be in God's Kingdom, you need to
be like children."

MARK 10:14



JESUS CARES ABOUT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Jesus said, "God wants married people to keep their promises."



Jesus said, "God wants husbands and wives to stay together as long as they live."



Jesus said, "Make sure you take care of children and keep them safe."

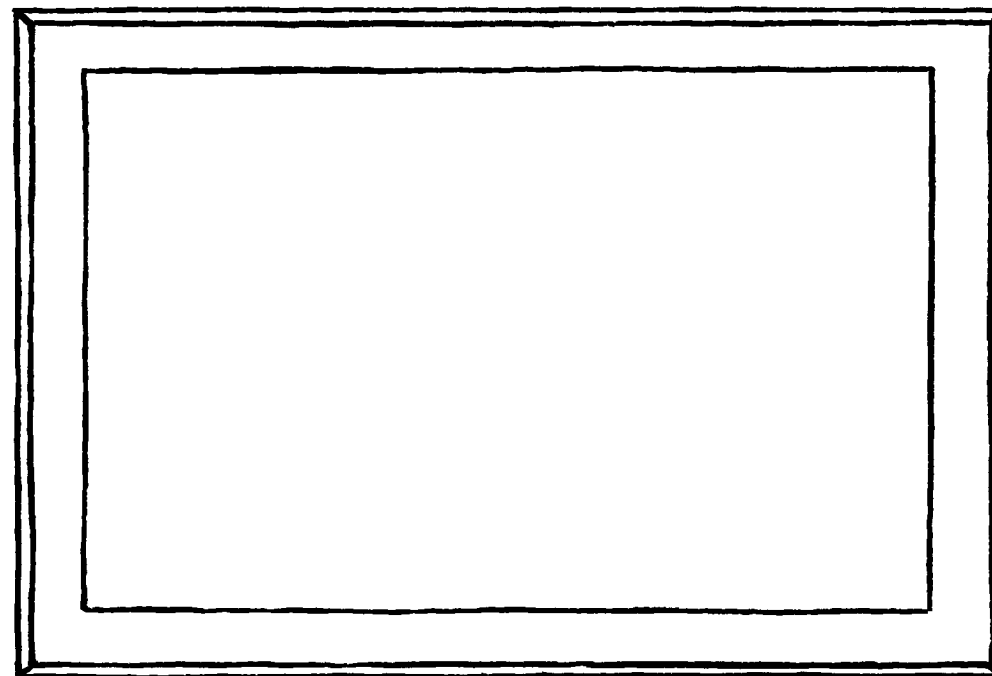


Whatever kind of family we live in, the most important thing is to love and care for each other.



When people brought their children to Jesus for a blessing, Jesus's friends told them to go away and stop bothering him. But Jesus said, "No, bring the children to me."

Children need families to love them and keep them safe. Families are not perfect. Some are not very loving. Some do not manage to stay together. But Jesus's love for all of us stays firm and strong, and can help us in the hard times.



In the picture frame, draw a loving family.