

LOVING OTHERS WITH DIFFERENT VALUES

Name withheld

I was trying to raise my children to have high moral values. But when one of their role models made a wrong choice, I wondered if everything I had tried to teach would unravel.

My sister-in-law Janey (name has been changed) was raised in the gospel and was a very committed member of the Church. After her seemingly happy temple marriage dissolved, people in her small community began to spread rumors and make judgments about her. She distanced herself from many of her friends and eventually the Church.

She started dating a young man, Andy, who soon moved in with her. I worried about what to tell my kids. My three young daughters loved their aunt Janey. Not only are our families very close, but she was their dance teacher, so they saw her several times a week.

For many months, they thought that Andy was visiting a lot, but I finally had to tell them that Janey and Andy were living together. I explained that the choice they made was a serious sin. My daughters seemed to understand, and we had a good discussion about the importance of living gospel principles.

Then a bomb hit. Janey happily announced to the family that she and Andy were expecting a baby. Again I worried about how this news would affect my children. Did they realize that this is not how Heavenly Father wants His children brought to earth? If they were around this situation, would they think it was acceptable and normal?

I fretted for weeks, not wanting to tell my children of this newest development. A month later Janey and Andy decided to get married. Why hadn't they waited to announce the pregnancy until after they were married?

Resentment boiled up inside me. How could I love Janey but not what she had done? How could I teach my kids to continue to love their aunt



COMMITMENT TO TRUTH

"Our tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs does not cause us to abandon our commitment to the truths we understand and the covenants we have made. . . . We must stand up for truth, even while we practice tolerance and respect for beliefs and ideas different from our own and for the people who hold them. . . .

"Similarly, with our children and others whom we have a duty to teach, our duty to truth is paramount. Of course, teaching efforts bear fruit only through the agency of others, so our teaching must always be done with love, patience, and persuasion."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Balancing Truth and Tolerance," *Ensign*, Feb. 2013, 28, 29; *Liahona*, Feb. 2013, 32, 33.



How could I teach my kids to continue to love their aunt but not the choices she had made?

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One day my sister told me about a young woman in her ward who had become pregnant. This young woman continued going to church and seemed happy and excited about the upcoming event in her life. The other young women were confused by what they perceived as her seemingly flip-pant attitude about the situation.

But my sister, who was a visiting teacher to the mother of the young woman, learned of the countless nights the young woman had cried herself to sleep, in misery over the choices that had led her to this predicament. After many weeks of torment, the young woman decided that she could continue to mourn over her actions, or she could move forward and be happy. Because of Christ's

atoning sacrifice, she could accept the consequences of her decisions and once again become clean through repentance.

I wondered if Janey had gone through something similar. Had she regretted her choices but, unable to change the consequences, accepted them and decided to move forward?

I felt shame at my harsh judgments and at my inability to love the way Jesus Christ expects us to love. As I reflected on the Savior's life, I remembered that He always sought out the sinners, teaching them through His words and example, and loving them. It was this love that softened hearts and changed people.

I realized that too often I loved people as long as they were acting the way I thought they should, but

as soon as they made a mistake, I condemned them in my heart. What a hypocrite I was! I realized I needed to repent. I needed to learn to love the sinner without endorsing the sin. Finally, I was able to release the anger I held against Janey and truly love her again.

I had another good discussion with my children. I emphasized the importance of getting married before having a baby. We were able to look forward to the birth of a new baby in the family. We all wanted to support Janey and share in this special time of her life. My kids realize that Aunt Janey did something wrong, but they still love her and Uncle Andy and hope their beautiful family will someday decide to come back into the waiting arms of our Savior, Jesus Christ. ■