

# CIRCUITRIDER *Reviews*



## **Raising Children to Love Their Neighbors**

by Carolyn C. Brown

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### ***Raising Children to Love Their Neighbors* by Carolyn C. Brown**

Teachers, parents, Sunday school teachers, and church preschool teachers are all very familiar with the importance of teaching children to share, to take turns, to say “please” and “thank you,” and to not hurt others’ feelings. Veteran Christian educator Carolyn Brown puts this important formation into the larger context of the mission of the church. How do our children grow in compassion? How can we lead them to leave the world better than they found it? How do we raise mission-minded children?

Based on the great commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, Brown’s book begins with a vision and some evocative questions. In a 21<sup>st</sup> century America where individualism reigns supreme, the task of raising generous, mission-minded children who grow to “live like Jesus” is more than ever a challenge and imperative to our congregations. Brown’s systematic approach will help congregations nurture children in their out-reaching journey of spiritual growth.

Brown posits seven necessary disciplines in the form of verbs: instruct, educate, exercise, drill, prepare, train, regulate, teach, school. This “disciplining” of our children, by intentionally shaping practices that help grow them up as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, becomes a means of grace through which God forms children and the adults who work with them to love our neighbors more fully.

The foundations include: teaching relationship skills, modeling love of neighbor, practicing love of neighbor together, telling stories of loving neighbors, using the vocabulary of compassion, talking about using money to love our neighbors and empower children to love others and change the world.

Having named the vision and the task, Brown's very helpful and extremely user-friendly book provides practical and detailed enrichment curriculum for preschool and grades 1-5. Readers are encouraged to take and adapt this material or use it whole cloth. There are themes, practical hands-on projects, doable activities, celebratory summary session plans and a resource list. There are mini-workshops for teachers, designed to shift the teachers' emphasis from classroom management to the teaching of relationship skills that become the foundation of compassion and generosity.

Despite the curriculum approach, parents are not left out! Chapter Three provides "Blurbs for Teachers and Parents" which can be used in church newsletters and hand-outs, sensitizing parents and the congregation to what it takes to raise children to love their neighbors. What will perhaps be a fundamental paradigm shift for some congregations involves a shift from seeing children as those who are to be out-of-sight-and-earshot so that the adults can "have church" but rather as disciples in formation right alongside the grown-ups. Brown envisions and advocates for a dynamic, loving, growing, multi-generational community of faith, growing together in love of God and love of neighbor.

This thought-provoking, helpful, affordable book will serve as a resource to congregations of every size and circumstance. And more than just a "how-to" book, it will help re-shape the congregation's sense of being a missional community together across generations as it grows in love and service. Brown's work is a deceptively simple source of renewal and growth for every congregation longing to shape new generations of disciples for a future with hope.

