

REDECORATING

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

—1 Peter 4:8

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the people of New York City wanted to do something that would lower the amount of crime in their town. One of the things they decided to do was to fix up parts of the city that were run-down, ugly, and not being taken care of very well. So they started repairing broken windows in buildings and cleaning up the subways. And guess what? The crime rate went down! It turns out that when people see a broken window, they're more likely to pick up a rock and break another one. When they live in an area where things are a mess and it looks as if nobody cares about anything, they're more likely to commit crimes such as vandalism and theft. On the other hand, when things look nice and well cared for, people are more likely to behave well. Why is that?

Well, it probably has something to do with today's devotion. It's based on 1 Peter 4:8, which says, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." The devotion is called "Redecorating."

DEVOTION

"What are all those people doing?" Erika asked. She and her dad were out for a walk. They were approaching an old building covered with graffiti.

"I don't know," he replied. "Let's go see." They went up to the crowd near the building. Several people were painting over the graffiti.

A woman walked over. "Hello, I'm Celeste."

Erika's dad shook her hand. "Hi, Celeste. I'm Robert, and this is Erika. What's going on?"

Celeste smiled. "I wanted to make our neighborhood more beautiful, so I got permission to paint a mural on this building. When I began painting, people offered to help." She showed them her design for the mural. It was a field of wildflowers near a river and mountains.

"That's pretty," Erika said. "Can I help too?"

Nodding, Celeste replied, "Sure! You can work on the bottom." She handed Erika a smock and a brush, then showed her where to paint. Erika worked beside her neighbors all afternoon, covering ugly words and drawings with bright, colorful flowers.

You can make life more beautiful by covering people's wrongs with love. Sometimes people make the world ugly by saying or doing hateful things. You'll only make it uglier by responding the same way. But you'll brighten things up if you show love and forgiveness instead.

WORDS TO TREASURE

Love covers over all wrongs.

—Proverbs 10:12

QUESTIONS

1. When somebody makes a nasty comment to you or treats you rudely, what is the first thing you feel like doing? If you did that, would it make things better or worse?
2. What do you think is the reason why people tend to respond with (or at least *want* to respond with) ugly words or actions when someone says or does something ugly to them?
3. A few answers are: (1) all people have had a tendency to sin ever since Adam and Eve committed the first sin in the Garden of Eden; (2) people are made in God's image, and because he is just, they have a deep sense of justice—so when someone sins against them, they want to settle the score, even though it's God's job to do that; (3) they get angry, and even though it's not a sin to be angry, it's always tempting to commit a sin when you're mad.

4. Why does it help to “cover over” others' sinful words and deeds with love?

One answer is: when God's people show grace, forgiveness, and love to those who sin, it's easier for the sinners to believe that God will treat them the same way—in other words, it points them toward God and shows them what he's like!

5. Have you ever tried using love and forgiveness to “cover over” a wrong someone did to you? What happened?
6. Even if a person who sins against you keeps treating you badly after you've responded with love and forgiveness, do you think it's a good idea to keep “covering over” people's bad words and actions with love? Why?

One answer is: it's always a good idea to do what God tells you to do in the Bible, because it's right and it pleases him!

7. Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the “Words to Treasure” Scripture verse.