A Successful Life

*1 John 4:19 - We love because He first loved us.*

How can a person have a successful life? It's a good question, don't you think?   
  
I found the answer to that question when I did my own wash for the first time. I filled some pillow cases with all my dirty laundry and headed to the local laundromat. There I filled up the machines, spent a bunch of quarters, and poured in some soap. Within the hour my clothes had been transformed. Yes, they were clean, but cleanliness is not the transformation to which I refer. My underwear was now pink; my white shirts were pink, and my sweatshirts were smaller, much smaller.  
  
When I called mom for advice, she asked, "Honey, did you wash everything together? Did you dry all your clothes on a high temperature setting?" The answer was yes to both questions. The maroon sweatshirt and the white underwear had gone into the same machine. The sweatshirts had all been dried on high. It was faster and cheaper to do it that way.  
  
That's when mom told me the answer to a successful life. She said, "Honey, you've got to read the manufacturer's instructions."  
  
When it came to doing laundry, consulting the manufacturer's instructions was something that had never occurred to me. When it comes to life, most people can say the same thing: it never occurred to them they might want to do the same.  
  
Now I have to tell you, if you do consult the Lord, things are going to get interesting. That's because the Lord will, in four words, tell you how to have good relationships, how to get along, how to be given peace, hope, happiness, and joy. Those four words ... easy:  
  
***LOVE AS JESUS LOVED***  
  
And just how did Jesus love? Well, I can tell you this: Jesus loved us not because of us, but in spite of us. When God set humanity up in the perfect Garden, humanity rejected His love. Our first parents said, "We think we can do better." And they tried. It was a disaster. Still, even though we rejected God, God didn't reject us. God continued to love us, and He showed that love by sending His Son to save us. Read through the first four books in the New Testament, and you will see how Jesus loved.  
  
You will see how Jesus kept loving when He was rejected. Society's elite tried to bring Him down; the religious leaders tried to sully His reputation, but Jesus kept loving them. When they called Him names, Jesus didn't retaliate; no, He just kept loving them. When they didn't understand or deliberately misunderstood His mission of salvation, Jesus didn't get all huffy and label them as "stupid." When they walked away from Him, He didn't say "good riddance to bad rubbish." No, Jesus kept on loving.  
  
He loved us with a love that was powerful and practical and profound. His self-sacrificing love was what stopped Him from retaliating when they beat Him and told lies about Him, and spit on Him, and whipped Him, and crowned Him with thorns. Look at Him as He hung on the cross. What do you think kept Him there, dying for you? Do you think it was the Roman nails or the guards at His feet? Don't be silly. It was His love for you which kept Him there. It was His love which said, "I will die so you might live." That's what it means to love as Jesus loved.  
  
**THE PRAYER**: Dear Lord Jesus. You have set a standard of love we can never duplicate or attain. Still, help us do what we can so we, and those around us, might see Your reflection in the way we live. In Your Name we ask it. Amen.