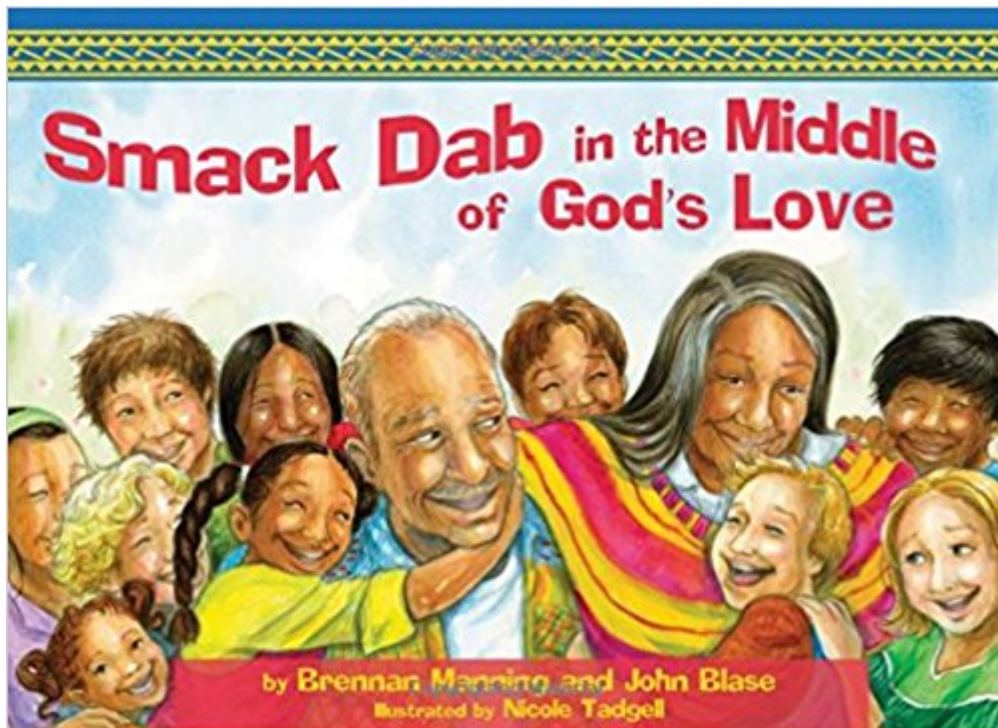


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# Smack Dab In The Middle Of God's Love



## Synopsis

Willie Juan said, “Little friends, what is one thing you think Abba will ask you someday when you are in heaven?” Willie Juan and Ana couldn’t have children of their own, but somehow, their home is always full of children and laughter and love. One day, when gathered together enjoying a beautiful evening and Ana’s most delicious sopapillas, Willie Juan asks this most curious question. As the group discusses the question, all come to the wonderful realization that Abba loves each of us, and we are all smack-dab in the middle of His love. “Abba loves you so much and wants you to enjoy his gifts every day. Gifts like Ana’s absolute best, most delicious sopapillas. And the hummingbirds and burros. And abuelas.” The first of Manning’s children’s books, this tender message is right on brand for the popular speaker and author who has traveled the world sharing Abba’s incredible love for His children.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

Brennan Manning spent his life and ministry helping others experience the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. A recovering alcoholic and former Franciscan priest, his own spiritual journey took him down a variety of paths, all of them leading to the profound reality of God’s irresistible

grace. His ministry responsibilities varied greatly from teacher, to minister to the poor, to solidary reflective. As a writer, Brennan Manning is best known as the author of the contemporary classics, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, *Abba's Child*, *Ruthless Trust*, *The Importance of Being Foolish*, *Patched Together*, and *The Furious Longing of God*. John Blase (pronounced "Blaze") is a writer/editor living along Colorado's Front Range. He currently serves as a developmental editor for David C. Cook Publishing, working hand in hand with such authors as Leonard Sweet, Frank Viola, Francis Chan, and most recently, a very close collaborative effort with Brennan Manning on the book, *The Furious Longing of God*. He served as a pastor for thirteen years in Southern Baptist and non-denominational churches in Texas, Arkansas, and Colorado, and for forty-two years, he's proudly been a pastor's son. John is the author of eight books with NavPress including *Living the Questions* and *Living the Letters* Bible study series. He also co-authored and edited several books with NavPress like the *Worldviews* reference book (TH1NK), *Real Life Stuff for Couples* and *The Message Children's Bible*. His next title releases September of 2009 *Touching Wonder: Recapturing the Awe of Christmas* (David C. Cook). John and his wife, Meredith, have been married for ?

Beautiful book!

What better place is there to be than smack dab in the middle of God's love? In their new book, which boasts that phrase as the title, Brennan Manning and John Blase share that truth with kids while telling a unique story about Willie Juan and his wife Ana. Set in a little Mexican village called Hopi, *Smack Dab in the Middle of God's Love* explores how Willie Juan and his wife share their lives with the children of the village. Vibrant illustrations help paint the picture of their loving exchanges with the children, showing them walking, teaching, feeding and encouraging in an effort to show them that they are always smack dab in the middle of God's love. My thoughts: I love the title of this book. Like the first page says, "smack-dab" is a great word! I also love the message the authors ultimately convey. They encourage us to be active in our communities, involved in the lives of children and passionate about reminding them that they are always in the center of God's love. The setting of the Mexican villages gives it a multi-cultural appeal that is missing in so many Christian children's books. I was thrilled with the illustrator's depiction of children in varying shades of the rainbow (although I wondered if such a village would actually be home to the little cuties with the blonde hair). I thought the story was well told, however I had to re-read the first two pages a few times. It seemed like a page was missing, as the book went from an explanation of the title on one

page and a discussion of "the man and his wife" on the next. I felt as if I'd missed the page that actually introduced this man and his wife, but the introduction came a few sentences later and the rest of the story flowed smoothly. This book is a keeper for us, largely because of the illustrations and its display of cultural diversity. As I mentioned, I don't think my kids get to see enough of this in the stories they're reading about the Lord. The authors successfully deliver the message that God's love is a love big enough to hold us all. It's a message that cannot be shared enough and the authors manage to share it in a unique and heart-warming way. I received a review copy of the book from Tommy Nelson.

*Smack Dab in the Middle of God's Love* by Brennan Manning and John Blase is a beautifully illustrated children's book about God's love for each one of us. Willie Juan and Anna couldn't have children of their own but their house is full of children. They show them all God's love and share their delicious sopapillas. As the title suggests, by the end of the story, all the children come to realize that they are "smack dab in the middle of God's Love." What a wonderful phrase! I found myself thinking that phrase several times after reading this book a couple of times. This is Brennan Manning's first children's book. He is a popular speaker and author who specializes in sharing God's love for His children to all his audiences. I read this book with my 9 year old son. The book is just a little young for him as it is suggested for ages 4 to 8. At first he rolled his eyes since it wasn't a chapter book. However, once he read it with me he said still enjoyed the theme of the story and he especially liked the brightly colored illustrations. By the end of the book, he was smiling and he said he would give it at least 4 stars even though it was a little young for him. I downloaded this book for kindle. However we just used the kindle app and read it on the computer so we could see the illustrations in all their bright colors. I would definitely want to buy this book in the hard copy to share with any other children unless I had a colored e-reader. I received an e-book copy of this book free from Thomas Nelson as a part of their Booksneeze program. I was not required to submit a positive review.

*Smack-Dab in the Middle of God's Love* is a book about a middle age couple, Willie Juan and Ana, who live in a small Mexican Village. They loved each other very much. Most of all, they loved God. Willie Juan and Ana, were unable to have children of their own, but they loved children dearly and always had a houseful of children from the village come to visit. Willie Juan loved to ask the children questions and asked them one day, "Little friends, someday, when you are in Heaven, what do you think Abba will ask you?" This got the kids to thinking and a couple of the kids had a couple of very

good questions. I liked this book a lot for a couple of reasons. The main one is it is trying to show just how much God loves you. Not only do they show it through the couples love of children, but also in the conversations they have with the children. It does it in a way that younger children can understand it. Also, the illustrations in this book are beautiful. Very colorful and eye catching. Overall, this is a very sweet book. My 6 year old and I loved reading it together. It will be a book that we will read often together. Disclaimer~ This book was given to me by BookSneeze, in exchange for a review. All opinions expressed are of my own.

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