

A close-up photograph of a man and a woman holding hands. The woman's hand is on the left, wearing a diamond ring on her ring finger. The man's hand is on the right, wearing a dark blue sleeve. The background is a soft, out-of-focus outdoor setting.

*APPLYING 1 CORINTHIANS 13
PRINCIPLES TO OUR
MARRIAGES*

Loving like Christ

EBOOK

A 5 DAY MARRIAGE STUDY

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Day One

For many years I was a stay-at-home/homeschooling mom. During this time, there were days my husband traveled for work that felt endlessly tiresome. When my husband would call or send pictures of what he was experiencing without me, all I could hear was the "without me" part. Chauffeuring kids to activities, teaching all day, cooking meals, and having blinders to anything but the present moment of my daily routines, spiraled me into a dark cloud of discontent.

I thought I was missing out.

But after talking to my husband, he also felt like he was missing out at times. He occasionally wished he could stay home and not be responsible for our financial well-being. He had days he wanted nothing more than to wear sweats to work, take the kids to the park, and enjoy our company.

He loved being with us and often missed seeing the kids score a basket or learn something new due to his traveling.

Seasons of Discontent

Isn't that the case so many times in life? We are content until we aren't. The grass always looks greener somewhere else. We think someone else's view of the world has a greater vantage point. We long for adventure and freedom.

Routine doesn't always feel exciting. Especially when that includes loud, messy kids. :)

Now, you have to understand that I wanted to live the life I was living. My husband thought my choice was good but knew that it had to be my choice, as I would be the one to bear most of this weight of teaching and caring for our kids on a daily basis. He was always supportive, but he never forced me to quit work and stay home. If anything, it put a bigger burden on him to support us. The alternatives had their own trade-offs.

The feelings of jealousy I struggled with were not in line with my choices. It wasn't my husband's fault that he was required to travel for work - often to warm, tropical places. :0

All our choices in life lead to missing something else. It is normal to wish we could do it all, but we can't.

But God knows it is not healthy for us to pine away for things others have. Many times, those things would not make us any more content, and He knows that. Loving well means being content in whatever season we are in, where God has us.

He desires for us to support and love our spouse and be 'for them' as He is 'for us'.

Entertaining discontent allows envy to cause bitterness and factions in our marriages. And this is not love.

Envy Defined

1 Corinthians 13:4, defines love as being free from envy. According to Strong's and Vine's Dictionary of the NT, envy is defined as:

To burn with zeal: to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, and anger.

To be moved with jealousy; to covet or desire what is not yours.

Nothing good comes from jealous or envious thoughts towards others, especially those we love and are commanded to care for above ourselves.

Can you imagine what my husband felt when he would call, and I would act disinterested in the new places he was seeing and the new information he was learning? I would make comments about how nice it must be to have alone time or to be free from responsibilities for a few days. I imagine it was hard for him to be excited about his adventures. And I would often forget to be content in the fact *that he had called*. He wanted to include me even if I couldn't physically be present with him. He was trying to invite me into his experience, and I selfishly shut the door.

Simply, I was at times, jealous, and it caused hurt in our marriage. I was self-centered and stole the joy I should have shared in with him. That would have been more productive for our relationship. My joy would have increased his joy if I had been for him.

God knows what He is doing when He warns us of the sin of envy. A little envy leads to a whole lot of bitterness. This bitterness builds a wall between the trust a couple should have. Rejoicing and weeping together should be the standard - not harboring ill will for our spouse when they are blessed differently than us. If we need further proof, check out the story of Joseph and the chaos and pain caused by his brothers' jealousy (Genesis 37).

The truth was that I enjoyed my kids and didn't really want to fly somewhere and back in a couple of days. That sounded exhausting. I didn't want to sit in a hotel all day while he attended meetings or venture into a new city by myself. I didn't even want the things I was jealous about. Isn't that ridiculous?

When God began to admonish me for these feelings and I confessed and prayed over them, I learned to find joy in living vicariously through my husband's stories and photos. I could be content where I was and be excited for his opportunities.

And he always said that he wished we could all join him. That would have made it even better. What a gift those words were/are to me.

Loving as God loves is hard at times. It requires seeking the good of your spouse more than your own. And building trust that we are a safe place to share in all the joys and sorrows of life together.

Applying Truth

So, how do we put away envy in our marriage?

1. **Think on these things** as Philippians 4:8 teaches. Capture the negative thoughts before you speak the words. Remember truth.
2. **Stop comparing.** Be content in the role you are in or talk through where you are struggling and work toward a solution that is best for all. Don't compare yourself to other marriages. We can look for positive role models in marriage but at the end of the day they have their own problems and unique relationships. No one is perfect and no one has identical needs. Look to each other and not outward to fix any issues.
3. **Be 'for them'.** Cheer them on. Act your way to thinking. Don't hold them back due to jealous feelings.
4. **Make every effort** to work on growing in maturity in marriage. Make a list of the things you feel you lack that are causing discontent. Pray about it and see 'what is' and 'what could be'. Life requires regular reflection and redirection. Look at the negative feelings to point you to the true problem. Then confess it and change course. Find verses on contentment and memorize and dwell on them.

Day 2

Biblical Kindness Defined

Kindness: to show oneself mild, fit for use, manageable, virtuous, and good.

The most interesting definition means to show oneself useful. (Strong's/Vines)

Our world and many Christians today have a disdain for the biblical concepts of submission in marriage as described in Ephesians 5:21-25. But the whole Christian life is characterized by submission and sacrifice. God does not only call women to recognize the leadership role of their husband over the home, but it also calls the husbands to love as Christ. Verse twenty-one calls us each to submit to one another out of reverence - or deep respect - for Christ. Both husband and wife should humble themselves to serve and love the other. ***When this is done as a reflection of the kindness of God through the sacrifice of Christ, it provides the stability and strength God can give to build a solid foundation for all to thrive.***

If we look back at the context in Chapter 4 leading to these thoughts on marriage, we see Paul explaining how to be renewed in Christ and changed to live in fellowship with one another. We

are to put away all wrath, laziness, corrupt talk, and old ways to walk in kindness and forgiveness toward one another.

Men and women alike are equal heirs through faith in Christ. Both have the same expectations to love and humbly serve the other. Both receive the same Spirit and call to live worthy of our salvation. Marriage doesn't remove their distinctions and personhood. It enhances them.

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Ephesians 5:21-25

"In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves **his wife** loves himself." Ephesians 5:28

Growing up, I felt some negative perspectives within the church that have caused many to cringe at the idea of submission, as I saw women treated as lesser people to their husbands. These specific men had not humbled themselves to the point of death nor shown their usefulness as husbands.

That is what kindness is. Being useful and good.

The "be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another" doesn't stop applying to those in marriages. Based upon the intimacy level as they become one, the standard becomes even higher

The Kindness of God

As I think about the kindness of God, I am left in awe of a God who drew me to repentance through his humility, grace, and sacrificial love.

That is how a man is to love His wife. It's a tall order. Christ came to set us free, and marriage should never leave someone feeling trapped and enslaved to the will of another. A husband should be able to trust and believe that his wife seeks the best for their family. According to Proverbs 31, a husband that safely trusts in his wife doesn't have to worry about her taking the credit card and running it up, putting them in financial jeopardy. That is not kindness. That is not useful.

Leadership does not mean to rule and own. Married couples still have personal relationships with Christ and must work on their individual lives to grow together. Only Christ rules and reigns in our hearts. There is no room for any other, even a spouse.

Jesus led with tempered strength. As we learned from Day 1 of the marriage series, we are to be long suffering. If we don't start there, we will never be able to be kind in the way God intends.

As someone who has been married for over a quarter of a century, I can tell you that a Christian woman that is seen as an equal heir to the kingdom, unique and distinct in her femininity, and lifted to be who God designed her to be, has no bitterness toward her husband's ability to lead their family. **It is a beautiful, kind gift.**

And a husband that can safely trust his wife is able to watch her succeed without envy or fear. He will find joy in watching her bloom in her unique giftings.

So many men these days don't have an accurate picture of how God shows kindness. Many women think that power frees them, but it is Christ alone that sets us free. Free to live useful lives, helping each other be faithful to Christ. Free to humbly submit to one another in love.

Kindness does not demean or demand. It doesn't seek to abuse its power or force its will on another. It sees God's creation the way He designed it. With structure that leads to peace and prosperity. With mutual affection and submission that loves Christ above all and then seeks to express it to others, even more those God has entrusted us to live and grow with.

If our marriages truly exhibited the kindness of God, there wouldn't be such a high divorce rate or struggles for power over one another. Christ came in humility and laid down His life to set sinful people free. He forgives and forgets. He holds us close. He desires for us to be whole. Do we want that for our spouse?

Kindness lets us be our true, image-bearing selves. Salvation frees us from all curses and sin and gives us power through Christ to live in His kindness and grace toward others. As new creations, right relationships can be had as we submit to the Spirit working in our lives.

In future verses, we will see that love does not seek its own. This means we seek the good of our spouses and family.

It all begins by mirroring the kindness of God. When we do, we will all flourish.



Photo by [Nathan Dumlao](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Applying The Truth of Kindness

1.Be useful. Do one small practical thing like bending to pick up the dirty socks, filling the toilet paper roll, warming the car, making the coffee, running an errand, etc. - just because you want to without acknowledgement.

2.Be mild. Consider the tone of your words today. Avoid snide remarks, rolling of the eyes, huffing, resentful thoughts, or harsh words. What comes out of our mouths and expressed in our bodies reveals what is on the inside.

3.Be manageable. Sometimes our expectations are not manageable. Sometimes our spouse has no idea of what they even are. Talking about our expectations in marriage is vital. We can't know what is important to the other without discussing it. But no one can meet everyone's expectations, and frustration will come if forced to. Make a list of the things that irritate you and then think about why.

Usually, we will find that we had an

expectation that wasn't met. Often, they weren't communicated or were unrealistic for the other person. Perhaps we have too many and need to prioritize our greatest needs.

Managing expectations with finances, meals, how to spend free time, family, holidays, vacations, children, education....is a kindness to a marriage.

4. Be of good virtue. Seek to learn and grow in your faith, in marriage, and in virtue/goodness. Commit to reading your Bible, talking with God, and sharing that with your spouse. Read a book on biblical marriage and mutual submission. Ask the Spirit to increase your character to mirror God's - one right choice at a time. Make every effort to grow in kindness by practicing it until it becomes a natural extension of who you are in your marriage.

When we mirror kindness, we will reap kindness. What choices will you make this week to actively mirror the kind and gracious love of God?

Day 3

The meaning of long-suffering in I Corinthians 13:4 is that love is "long-tempered" or "long of mind or soul". The Vines Expository Dictionary of the NT defines it as follows:

"to be patient, longsuffering, to bear with," lit., "to be long-tempered," is rendered by the verb "to be longsuffering" in [Luke 18:7](#); in [1Th 5:14](#); so in [Jam 5:7, 8](#); in [2Pe 3:9](#), "is longsuffering."

Note: "Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy, and is used of God, [Exodus 34:6](#); [Rom 2:4](#); [1Pe 3:20](#). Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope, [1Th 1:3](#); it is not used of God." *

[* From Notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, pp. 183, 184.]

It is interesting that in the Old Testament it is a Hebrew idiom for "long of nose" or breathing (Exodus 36:6). Angry people tend to breathe short, heavy breaths whereas patient people take long slow breaths, hence, "long in nose". Isn't that so true.

How can we be "long of nose" towards those we are married to?

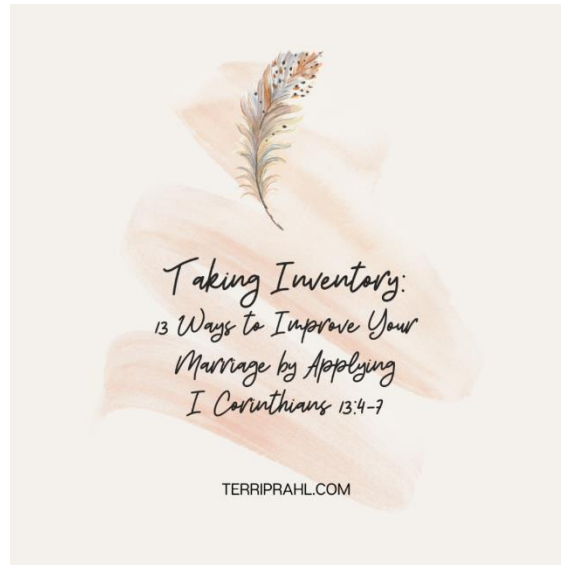
I asked my husband the other night how he puts up with the things that I do that irritate him. Being hesitant to answer, thinking it was a trap, he simply said he chooses not to dwell on it. :)

I remember one instance when I used our car to pick up ten bags of red mulch. I could have waited on him to use the truck, but I was anxious to get to work and decided to jump right in. Now you have to understand how he values keeping our vehicles clean. It matters a great deal to him.

I didn't think anything about this being a messy job. I just went inside, paid for some mulch, drove up to the gate, and asked the attendant to throw them in the back. He looked at me like, are you sure? I popped the door, signaling the all clear. Unbeknownst to me the mulch bags had some moisture from sitting outside, and red coloring seeped all over the carpet in the floor of the hatchback as I drove home. When I unloaded them and noticed the mess, I knew Jason would not be happy. My attempts to soak it up with towels was unsuccessful.

When he arrived home, I explained what had happened and asked how to best clean it up, planning to scrub all night long. But, after he took a long, deep breath, he said he would take care of it for me and not to worry. The carpet shampooer would take it out. Then he asked me to use the truck for such things. (To which I gladly do now!)

That is a prime example of being "long of nose". :) It's actually the opposite of how our English translations view being long of nose...like Pinocchio caught in a lie. It is a beautiful attribute of God, and my husband has learned to cultivate it, live it, and freely gift it to me.



Learning to be Long-Suffering

My husband hasn't always been so patient, and he would be the first to agree. But, as he *walks* with Jesus, he has learned to be long-suffering. He has grown to love me even when I am not so lovable.

His advice? **Don't dwell on it.** He said that getting older helps as you forget things more easily as well. lol But, his advice to keep short accounts and to allow for mistakes is wise. He has learned to restrain his immediate impulse to express his anger and frustration. Jason chooses to hope for a good relationship and sees beyond 'the mulch' to who I am as his wife and child of God.

What a gift of grace. That is the mercy of God manifesting itself in human form. Being loved when we don't deserve it brings greater intimacy and growth in relationships between God and others.

So, this week, consider being "long of nose". Consider being patient in all circumstances for the purpose of glorifying God and loving your spouse like God loves us. Do they always deserve it? No. Do we always deserve it? No.

But isn't it the sweetest when mercy and patience is given to us? A million times, yes!



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Applying Truth to our Marriages

To help encourage stronger marriages, I have created a free, three-page marriage study and checklist based off of I Corinthians 13:4-7. It can be found in the member archive or email terriprahl@gmail.com to have it sent to you.

God wants us to be committed and faithful to our spouses and this is a great way to start a challenging but healthy conversation.



Remembering the grace of God and what we truly deserve keeps the sin of envy from having power over us.

Have you ever experienced envy towards your spouse? How do you guard yourself from letting jealousy erode the trust in your relationship?

Day 4

In this fourth post on marriage, we will look at the character of God that was perfectly illustrated through the submission of Christ to carry out the Father's will, leaving Heaven, humbling Himself as a man, and bearing the weight of the whole world's sin.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Philippians 2:3-8 ESV

I Corinthians 13:4-6 tells us that God's love is humble. It is not puffed up, not rude, doesn't seek its own, is not provoked, and thinks no evil but rejoices in truth. We are to have this same mind and posture towards others, especially our spouses.

Humility encompasses all the next five love attributes, so I will speak briefly to each one.

Humility Defined

Humility is defined by the Strong's concordance/Vine's Dictionary as:

Abase: signifies "to make low, bring low,"

(a) of bringing to the ground, making level, reducing to a plain, as in [Luke 3:5](#);

(b) metaphorically in the Active Voice, to bring to a humble condition, "to abase," [2 Cor 11:7](#), and in the Passive, "to be abased," [Philippians 4:12](#); in [Matthew 23:12](#); [Luke 14:11](#); [18:14](#), the AV has "shall be abased," the RV "shall be humbled." It is translated "humble yourselves" in the Middle Voice sense in [James 4:10](#); [1 Peter 5:6](#); "humble," in [Matthew 18:4](#); [2 Corinthians 12:21](#) and [Philippians 2:8](#).

See [HUMBLE](#), [LOW](#). Cp., *tapeinos*, "lowly," *tapeinosis*, "humiliation," and *tapeinophrosune*, "humility."

From these definitions, we can see that God gives no room for thinking we are better than others. We are to view one another as equal heirs of salvation in Christ. In marriage, we are not to view our partners as being lower than ourselves. Quite the opposite, we are each to think more highly of the other and looks for ways to serve out of love. No one person in a relationship should be demanding to be served and puffed up about their role in marriage.

Love is not rude.

A humble person is not rude. If you view the other more highly than yourself, you will not condescend and speak haughty words or bark commands at the other. A humble person is in touch with their own flaws and is slow to point out the flaws in others. They speak life-giving words and not corrupt communication.

Do we spend more time criticizing or building up our spouse?

In our early years of marriage, there were times I was discontent. We had little, yet everything we needed. Jason was working hard, and I appreciated how he tried to better our lives by working two jobs at times. And yet, when we would sit and dream like young couples do, I would grow cynical and unbelieving. I would say phrases like, "well, that will never happen", "we will never have a home like that", or "our kids will never go to college".

Do you know what that did to my hard-working husband? It discouraged and disheartened him. I hate that I behaved like that. We were a team, and I needed to believe in our dreams even if it was hard to see at the time. *We get stuck in our day-to-day rhythms and feel like things will always be the way they are.* I can look back now and see how many blessings I thought were pipe dreams have now come true. We worked and believed together for those things. When Jason stopped me once and pointed this critical spirit out, I was able to see it and, in humility, confess it and fix my attitude towards one of hope.

Love does not seek its own.

Many marriages struggle to manage their time as couples. Especially once you throw in a few kids into the mix, there is never enough alone or "me" time. When you are single, you can spend time doing the things you love as often as you like. But when we join with another, our time is not just our own. Healthy marriages desire for both individuals to be who they are and enjoy those things that make them distinctive. Whether its hunting, video games, antique shopping, or reading, we should want our spouse to enjoy the things they enjoy. And we don't always have to enjoy them together.

Jason and I each have our own interests as well as shared interests. When the kids were younger, we traded duty often so the other could enjoy friends, pursue their passions, or reach a career goal. We also always made time together as a family and as a couple. It might have just been thirty minutes on the couch laughing together over a sit-com after the kids were in bed, but we always sought to be a couple.

There are many ways we can seek our own in marriage. If we see ourselves as more important than the other, we will view our time as more important. While I certainly knew that Jason's work had priority at times in our lives, I also knew that he valued my work in the home, with our kids, and in the community. He honored my time with family and willingly kept the kids for a Saturday shopping trip. The key is good communication. Talk about what each of your needs are. There will be times when one person needs more and, in those moments, we humbly serve for the good of the whole family.

Love is not easily provoked.

Jason and I were brainstorming about how we can provoke or incite one another to frustration, anger, or even sadness in marriage.

One of the top issues on our list was not listening to the feelings of the other. We both have different personalities and ways to express ourselves. Jason is not much of a talker. He listens while I talk. Normally, he does this with patience and grace. I can have a lot of words! (This is why he likes that I am writing...more time typing and less time talking his ear off. ha!) But Jason also likes his sleep. He has a mentally taxing job and doesn't like to stay up late talking during the work week. I, however, was usually busy until the kids went to bed and then had things to do to prep for the next day or my own hobbies to pursue. Right now, as empty-nesters, I write in the evenings after dinner, and he has taken up guitar. It is easy to lose track of time. Then when I hear him moving downstairs for bed, I remember all the things I wanted to talk to him about from my day. :) Well, he doesn't want to talk at 11 pm at night, because he is tired. There are times when he does, but I have learned that it frustrates him when I could have come to talk to him at any point in the evening. Plus, once his head hits the pillow, it is difficult for him to stay awake enough to listen. This is just one very real way that I can provoke him to frustration. There are things that he does at times that he knows I find irritating. We both must consider the other's feelings and work on a solution for these issues. That is loving out of humility.

Love thinks no evil and rejoices in truth.

We should not automatically assume the worst about our spouse. If they are running late, it would be humble to stop and ask what happened before we scold or get mad. I understand that if there is history of mistrust, this is even harder to do. But love does not jump to conclusions without evidence. It seeks the truth, even if that truth is hard to hear. Love doesn't look for ways to punish one another or throw past mistakes back in their faces. Sometimes, we get in a pattern of nit-picking flaws and fail to see all the good the other contributes.

Even in little things that are expected behavior...like picking up after themselves, filling the car with gas when it's low, reading to a child before bed, or saying "I love you" are things that can be rejoiced in. Take the time to humbly acknowledge the good things you see in your spouse. Make it the norm not the exception.

Applying Truth

Humility is hard. It is unnatural and countercultural. As humans, we seek our own. But as Christians, who follow the example of Christ to humbly submit to one another in love.

In marriage, God calls us to live in mutual affection and love and to serve one another with humility. His example led Him to leave the power and glory of Heaven to ascend to a low, earthly state. His act was sacrificial and beneath Him. He is God and yet submitted to His Father's will. Jesus is equal yet distinct to the Father. They are one.

This is the picture of a biblical marriage. A husband is to love and serve his wife as Christ modeled for the Church and for each of those in the body of Christ. His wife is an equal heir to the kingdom with her own distinction. Yet, they are one. They love and serve one another in humility. The husband is to be the leader, lovingly guiding his family to seek God and to make decisions for the good of the family. His needs aren't more important than his wife's. Her needs are not more important than his. It is a beautiful mystery when done in humility and love.

How can you show humility in your marriage today?

1. Watch for when you spouse sighs or show signs of frustration. Is it due to your behavior in any way? Ask them what they are weary or frustrated over? If there a way to lighten their load?
2. How are you spending your time? Do you demand too much attention or ignore their signals of loneliness and longing? Do you set aside time to make sure their needs are also being met? Have a conversation about what you both need and work together to carve out the time to meet these needs, whether individual or together. Schedule a date even if it means after the kids are in bed. If they want to pursue something, how can you work to make it a reality?
3. Believe the best about your spouse. Be slow to anger. Ask questions before reacting.
4. When you think about your spouse, what kind of thoughts emerge? If they are mostly negative, consider changing the narrative. When they mess up, do you throw it back in their face or do you seek to humbly see them restored and helped?
5. Speak life over your spouse today. Acknowledge the ways they show up for you and the family no matter how small.
6. Pray together and humbly ask God to strengthen your marriage.

Humility is hard, but it is the very mind of Christ. Will you join me in making every effort to honor our spouses and live humbly together as God's people?

Day 5

Before I begin this last post in my marriage series, I want to be sure to reiterate that the love in I Corinthians 13 is **agápē**, meaning love, affection, or benevolence. I John 4:8 says that God *is* love. So, an agape love is exhibiting the very character of God in how He shows affection and grace to His people.

Knowing this, the standard is high. It is something we ask the Spirit of God to produce in our lives. But, this side of Heaven, we are works in progress and we will not always fulfill it. Due to sin, there will be many who desire for their marriages to flourish and endure, but the other person fails to keep their commitment. This is a reality in this fallen world. God's love covers a multitude of sins and freedom is found in Him.

My goal is to encourage those who are married to seek to emulate the love of God. It will transform the relationship if both people seek to grow in Christ. If it is only you who is seeking to love, you will still be pleasing God and strengthened and transformed in the process. Life is

hard. We can't control others outside of ourselves. But *we can honor the truth of Scripture and make every effort to grow in love in our marriages.*

The 4 "All's"

Love **bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

I Corinthians 13:7 ESV

Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

I Corinthians 13:7 NLT

Defining terms

1. **Love bears all things.** It never gives up. steg'-o; from [G4721](#); to roof over, i.e. (figuratively) to cover with silence (endure patiently):—(for-)bear, suffer.
2. **Love believes all things.** It never loses faith. pist-yoo'-o; from [G4102](#); to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), i.e. credit; by implication, to entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ):—believe(-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with.
3. **Love hopes all things.** It is always hopeful. el-pid'-zo; from [G1680](#); to expect or confide:—(have, thing) hope(-d) (for), trust.
4. **Love endures all things.** It withstands through every circumstance. hoop-om-en'-o; from [G5259](#) and [G3306](#); to stay under (behind), i.e. remain; figuratively, to undergo, i.e. bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere:—abide, endure, (take) patient(-ly), suffer, tarry behind.

God loves in a perfect way. He never gives up on us. According to 1 John 1:9, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our confessed sins. He promises to never leave nor forsake us in Hebrews 13:5. God is faithful and always keeps His promises. *Therefore, our hope is assured because He cannot lie.*

So, how do we imitate His love in this way in our marriages? Is it possible?

Yes, it's possible. God gives us *everything we need for life and godliness*. The Spirit works as we yield to Him and produces the fruits of love in our lives. Will we do it perfectly? No. Should we still try? Absolutely.

(Going back to a previous lesson on love being humble, if we are living in humility, we will say we are sorry when we fail and strive to improve.)

Applying the 4 'All's' to Marriage

- **Love bears all.**

This does not mean that we ignore sin or allow people to abuse us. God's love and design is good. However, thankfully, God does bear with us in our imperfection. He loves us enough to protect us from sin and to correct us in error. And even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Our culture quits on people too easily. If we want to emulate Christ, we will be long suffering. We are taught to bear with one another and make room for one another's faults. Forgiving one another and covering the small irritations of life with love prepares us to love one another in big ways when we desperately need it.

We are quick to accept grace when it is given to us, but we aren't always so quick to hand it out. How often are we irritable at the smallest of things? How often do we hold on to petty issues until they fester into negative perceptions about those we are to love? In marriage, this means we must be transparent and not hide our struggles from one another. We need to help one another grow in grace and love. If something bothers us, we need to be honest and talk it through in a gracious manner. And we bear with one another. We hold each other up. And we embrace the parts of them that are different than the parts of us. We see these differences as a part of how God made them and not a source of annoyance.

- **Love Believes All.**

I love the passage in Proverbs 31 that says, "her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value". Ephesians 5:33 speaks to both: "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband". I have been blessed with a man that believes the best about me. He doesn't micromanage how I spend money, because he believes I am trustworthy and would never put our family in jeopardy by being spontaneously impulsive. He believes that I am smart. There is a mutual trust between us. It is easy for me to respect a man like him.

One of the times I hurt my husband the most in early marriage was when I accused him of something before asking about it. Part of my knowledge about his past lurked in my mind, planting a seed of doubt even though I knew what was true about him. The question could have simply been asked while believing the best of what I knew about him - that he had walked out in front of me for years. But instead, fear gripped me, and accusations flew. He was hurt by my quick mistrust. I had to begin to "believe all" in love.

Marriage requires a commitment to trust our spouse. *To believe the best about their motivations and not stew on the worst of our imaginations.* We should have faith in them and speak well of them towards others. We don't throw their dirty laundry out into the public. If help is needed, there is a way to seek that while protecting your relationship.



Photo by [Ron Smith](#) on [Unsplash](#)

- **Love hopes in all circumstances.**

Do you dream with your spouse? Do you talk and hope for your future? Do you commit to helping one another mature in faith? Do you commit to future days believing that you will see those days together? The Bible says that where we lack vision, we perish. Just as a believer withstands through trials for the joy that is set before them, so in marriage, we need to have a vision for our family's future. Whether that is a family of two or ten, a family needs to have a vision for where they want to end up. They need to hope. Hope will not put us to shame (Romans 5:5).

One of my favorite memories involved an impromptu weekend trip where my husband and I dreamed about foster care and the education of our children. We talked and prayed, came home, and sold our house, and began a new adventure. In unity. We can accomplish much as the team God designed us to be!

- **Love endures all.**

Are we committed from the beginning to remain faithful to one another? Do we have conditions which have to be met to be fully engaged in our marriage? This is a big difference between the cultural idea of marital relationships and a biblical one. Many choose to withhold the formal commitment of civil and spiritual marriage until they feel like they can live together well. They want to find out if they are compatible before diving in. Mostly they want an escape plan with the least amount of pain as possible. While dating reveals many of these things, marriage is a huge leap of faith. No one can know the full heart of another. There will be times you don't "feel" in love as life happens, causing the fairytale to fade. But genuine love endures. It doesn't quit over feelings. It endures through all the hardships of life...together.

My husband and I have faced burying a child together. We have faced many other physical, financial, and spiritual trials, but this tragedy made us dig in. It taught us to truly bear one another's burdens and to stay when the sadness hung over us. Satan tried to use that to build a wall between us. We were two people grieving in unique ways, making it hard to meet the needs of the other in our anguish. But because of our commitment to one another before God, we endured until we could find joy in one another again. Until we could find joy in many things we once had again. By God's grace, we were held together and stronger than ever.

Applying the 4 'Alls' of Agape Love

1. In order to hope in all, we can't entertain the idea of divorce. Don't throw it around as a threat when angry. Create a boundary and don't cross it. Our words speak what is in our hearts and lead to actions.
2. Make a date to dream and hope together. Plan what you want to impart to your children. How do you want your relationship and family to look in a year, 5, or 10? What is a way to invest in your marriage for the future? (It could look like alone time, sweet notes left in a car, reading a book and discussing it, a Bible study at church together, serving in community, or going to counseling.)
3. Be slow to anger and quick to listen. Have a mindset of believing the best before reacting for the worst.
4. Create a safe zone for conversation where you can communicate hard things without fear of sharing. This is not a session for picking on each other's faults but a sincere, honest conversation about the things you each are struggling with in marriage. It can then begin talks about solutions and lead to growth. Hiding from one another does no one any good. We all desire to be seen and known. Marriage should be the most intimate, safe place for us to flourish as people.
5. Simply hug your spouse and say I love you and am committed to you for the long haul. :)

As always, if you think it would help someone else, please consider sharing it by inviting others to join The Unfolding email list. Thank you!

Always cheering you on in your walk with Christ. - Terri