

# What Love Looks Like

By Steve Durkac

***"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)\****

When we look at this passage we see sixteen specific things that identify what love looks like and what love should look like in our marriage relationships. Below, I've laid those things out and shared my own pastoral comments on each of those, so here they are:

1) **Love is patient** – Waiting on your spouse is an expression of your love for them. Yes, there will be times when your patience for them will be tested, but when that conflict arises deal with it fairly. Conflict is inevitable between two different people, but handling conflict is the key to a successful and fulfilling marriage. Nothing of value to your life was ever created without conflict - like your home, car, dinner, children - why would you expect your marriage to be any different?

2) **Love is kind** – Kindness is easy to express when you are dating, but don't lose that after the wedding when familiarity sets in. Be intentional about being kind to your spouse. Husband, make it a habit to hold the car door for your wife and throw in a simple kiss. Wife, say something positive to your husband every day. If your spouse has their heart set in the right direction they will reciprocate your kindness toward them because in that you are offering a bridge that will bring them to your side.

3) **Love does not envy** – Be happy and satisfied when your spouse is enjoying greater success than you or doing something that you wish you were doing or has some type of talent that you wish you posed. Instead, don't entertain envy, but express a thankfulness and a happiness for them because in marriage when one is blessed, both are blessed. When Jesus said the two shall become one, He didn't mean decide which one, He meant become one together in love, purpose, and marriage.

4) **Love does not boast** – Sometimes the husband is right, sometimes the wife is right, but at no time should you beat up the other with your gloating. It's OK to be playful in your competitiveness, but just know that marriage is not a competitive game because either you both win or you both lose. Husbands and wives need to talk in terms of "we" or "us" because if your conversations are all "I" and "me" the home in which you live will soon be a very lonely and empty place.

5) **Love is not proud** – Besides actually saying "I love you" regularly, you must be willing and ready to say "I was wrong" and "I am sorry" because pride will weigh the marriage down.

Humility is actually a positive trait in a relationship and by being willing to admit your shortcomings or inability to understand, love will thrive. If you find it hard to outright say "I love you" or "I am sorry" or "I was wrong" you must still find a way to quickly express it, even if it is a non-verbal but make certain your spouse understands.

6) **Love does not dishonor** – Remember that both you and your spouse are created in the image of God so to treat the other without respect is to dishonor God. Without God in your marriage you cannot have peace and contentment when you find yourself in conflict, and it's easier to value your spouse when you see them through God's eyes. You found someone who you believe is perfect for you, not someone who is perfect, so you extend grace because you know you will need grace extended back to you, too.

7) **Love is not self-seeking** – Marriage is all about loving your spouse, not about getting whatever you want or think you need. It is not about fulfilling your sexual, financial, or companion needs, it is all about submitting yourself to your spouse's needs but that is not a license to disregard their objections. Your purest fulfillment in marriage will come by completely focusing on the well-being of the other. When you are taking care of your spouse, marriage will take care of you.

8) **Love is not easily angered** – Appreciate your spouse for those characteristics that first attracted you to them, but remember that they, like you, are not perfect. Marriage is not about making you happy, it's about making you holy. It is a process of sanctification between two opposite humans and if you keep that in mind you will be less likely to get angry. You may feel at times that you are not in control of a decision made or action taken by your spouse, but anger will not remedy it so turn to God through prayer.

9) **Love keeps no record of wrongs** – When you have to forgive your spouse don't forget to forget the offense. You may remember to keep boundaries in place for any serious sins against the marriage, but for personal relationship conflicts, forget about it. Rehearsing wrongs will only serve to irritate your own soul and not impact any needed change. Even if a wrong remains by nagging at you, resist using it as a verbal weapon to hurt your spouse in an argument. Opened wounds don't heal easily.

10) **Love does not delight in evil** – Guard your marriage and your life from getting involved in any evil activities, including illegal, because both husband and wife will suffer forever from invited sin, immorality, and wickedness into a marriage relationship. This is also precisely why Hebrews 13:4 admonishes couples to keep their bedroom pure. You may be entertaining some fantasy in your mind, but stop feeding it before it leads you into regret and remorse.

11) **Love rejoices with the truth** – Uphold, promote, and give attention to whatever is true, righteous, and good so your marriage will always have a compass to get it back on course when life goes astray. The ultimate truth is Jesus Christ and when you remain faithful to Him in worship you will find your marriage a blessing. A husband and wife both growing in Christians grace through fellowship is ideal, but if you are the lone disciple please remain steadfast through faith.

12) **Love always protects** – Husbands seem to naturally fill the role of protector of their wives and that is a good way for a man to show his love for his bride, but it is also important to continually assess your relationship. Romance and courtship should never end at the wedding and maintaining that protects a marriage from potential divorce. Each morning is a new day and that is true for your marriage. What you did yesterday is gone, so you must ask what you can do to make your spouse feel loved today?

13) **Love always trusts** – Both husband and wife will communicate differently, but both must express trust in the other for love to flourish. Trusting your spouse will further their trust in you. You communicate trust by affirming your love in each other by knowing the love language that best makes them feel loved and verbalize “I love you” frequently every day. You must know what helps your spouse feel most loved - is it gifts, is it touch, is it words, is it service, or is it quality time?

14) **Love always hopes** – In marriage, two become one and as one you both will have emotional strength to face the unknown future. In the good times, and starting at day one, love and lean on each other for your emotional and physical needs so when the tough times arise you can both find encouragement and hope together. Don't criticize your spouse for their small struggles or stressful circumstances, but use those as opportunities to invest in their reason to hope for better days ahead.

15) **Love always perseveres** – Marriage is a lifetime journey, and marriages that last 40, 50, 60 years do so because they decided to at the beginning. Couples who stay together the longest are happier as the years go by, because as they work through conflicts and seasons of aging they enjoy a greater spectrum of experiences built beyond youth on spiritual and emotional matters. Hardships in marriage can be two steps forward, three steps back, but with time it is more forward than back.

16) **Love never fails** – You are human, your spouse is human, and humans fail. However, God never fails, and 1 John 4:8 tells us that our God is love and those whose love never fails are those who know God, so invite and keep God in your marriage by not neglecting the word of God or the worship of God or a life of prayer fixed on your God. When God is in your marriage you have a three cord strand that is not easily broken because the tensions of life may wear on you but it will not fail you.

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