



1 John 3:16 states: “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.” Love is giving; giving of ourselves, to the point of laying down our lives for our brothers; or in marriage, our spouse. But what does that mean on a daily basis? What does it look like? For our answer, we turn to the love chapter – 1Corinthians 13. The love chapter begins with the admonition that one can do all the religious things, possess incredible knowledge or faith, give everything they own to the poor and die for the faith, but without love, it is all worthless. Love is the basis for everything we are as Christians and it should be a daily part of our lives. 1Corinthians 13 provides an outline of God’s ways to love our spouses in some very practical ways.

Love is patient; the word here is long-suffering. Loving our spouse means that we endure offenses or slights and while we certainly should not allow our spouse to sin against us, how often do we angrily react to each and every little wrong we experience? We need to be long-suffering with our spouse and when we must address an issue, do it in love.

Love is kind; being considerate, helpful, gentle, and mild. Do we look for ways to help our spouse? Are we gentle and mild, even when addressing issues? The answer in most marriages is a resounding “NO!” We love our spouse by being kind to him or her.

Love does not envy; it is not discontent with another’s success, advantages or possessions. It looks to build our spouse up rather than tearing them down. It is not being resentful at giving to our spouse or playing the martyr for not getting what we think we deserve. **Love does not boast;** it does not remind our spouse of all we’ve done for them (while we are usually reminding them what they haven’t done for us). Which goes along with the next attribute; **love is not proud.** Too often we are overly concerned with what we deserve. We don’t give because we perceive our spouse is not giving enough; its pride and pride will destroy not only our marriage, but all our relationships.

Love is not rude; acting in a discourteous or impolite way. We need to be concerned with how our behavior affects our spouse. What we have to say may be right, but if say it in a mean or impolite, way, we are rude and not loving.

Love is not self-seeking. Are we seeking the best for our spouse? Or ourselves? Too often we put our self first, rather than putting our spouse first as the Bible teaches.

Love is not easily angered, yet angry reactions often characterize interaction with our spouse. And then we justify it by saying, ‘well if they hadn’t...’

Love keeps no record of wrongs. Based on this statement, I could say that virtually every couple coming for counseling does not love each other (but I won’t). They often spend a lot of time listing all the wrongs their spouse has committed throughout their marriage. Love means that we forgive our spouse for wrongs and then let it go.

Love rejoices in good, not evil; are we glad when our spouse reaps the consequences for his or her actions? Or when someone else points out a poor behavior? God’s love means that we celebrate the positives and have compassion when things don’t go right for our spouse.

Love protects; we are to be our spouse’s defender and stick up for him or her.

Love always trusts; meaning that we look at our spouse’s motives positively. We don’t assume the bad from our spouse.

Love always hopes; we are optimistic regarding our relationship and seek to encourage our spouse rather than tearing them down with the ‘you will never...’ or ‘you’ll always be...’

Love always perseveres. We don’t get discouraged, but continue to work at our marriage even when things aren’t going right.

You can love your spouse God’s way; but it does require some effort and you must definitely die to yourself and seek to give. Yes, you are not Christ, you won’t do it perfectly, but with practice, you can do it better.

Helpful Resources:

Fortified Marriages Resource page: www.fortifiedmarriages.com - The Fortified Marriages Manual & Workbook is a great resource to help you grow in your love for your spouse.