

The Loving Mother
(Exposition of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

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One grown man gave this account of the gifts under the Christmas tree. “Some of my earliest memories from childhood are of sneaking under the Christmas tree to see what gifts had my name on them. I can remember lifting, shaking, and even peeling back some wrapping paper in order to see what toys my parents had gotten me. One Christmas, before I could read, I opened every single gift under the tree. The December after I turned five, however, I was in for a shock. I looked under the tree and found not a single present with my name on the tag. There were gifts there for everyone else but nothing with a ‘to Joe’ on it.

“I was heartbroken. It wasn’t so much that I was NOT getting toys. It was the fact that they had forgotten about me. Never in my young life had I felt unloved until that moment. With tears in my eyes I went and got some old toys of mine and some leftover wrapping paper. I had started to wrap them so that I could have something under the tree when my Mom caught me. Taking me in her arms she lovingly explained that I hadn’t been forgotten. They had gotten me presents but had decided to hide them from my prying eyes and fingers until Christmas Day. Looking back now I can’t even remember what I got that year, but I will always remember that reassuring moment in my Mother’s arms. The gift of love she gave me then still remains in my heart to this day.”

This is a Mother’s Day study that is going to focus on the subject of love – “A Mother’s Love.” We are looking at the love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13. We will have something in this study for all of us, but we will have various questions and applications dealing with mothers and women, as we reflect on the importance of being a godly woman, wife, and mother. The sweetest flower that blooms in God’s garden is love!

Paul places the explanation of love in the context of gifts (the gifts of the Spirit). This reminds us that gifts used out of love are the greatest gifts of all. But in explaining love, we are reminded that love will transform our marriage. It will transform our church. It will transform ourselves. If we love, we will stop living selfishly and start living sacrificially for others. Love is actually part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). But what Paul is teaching in this chapter is that love is

greater than any gift. He concludes that some of the early sign gifts in the church would be necessary to jumpstart the church but they would cease or fail. But love would continue on because it is more important than any gift. 1 Corinthians 13:8 concludes with these words: “Charity (love) never faileth.” The whole point is this. We should use our gifts in love and not in a self-serving manner.

1 Corinthians 13:1-2

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”

First, gifts without love result in a Christian being a noise maker in life. Paul says that without love we “become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). Paul does not have anything against instruments but instruments do make noise and if you fail to affectionately love others and only live for yourself, then you are nothing but a bunch of noise! You are tooting your own horn and you are not doing a very good job with it. You are crashing your own cymbals and do you know what – nobody is listening! Love is linked to the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13) because the gifts are always to be exercised by the fruit of the Spirit, which is love. If you are not using your gifts out of love, then you might as well not use them. You are only making a lot of noise!

Second, gifts without love result in a Christian being nothing in life (1 Cor. 13:2-3). Paul says, “I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2). Do you want to be a nothing? If I would give to charity to feed the poor (“all my goods to feed the poor”) and even give my life for some cause (“body to be burned”) and not possess true love, then my gifts, even the giving of myself in death, is worthless! I am nothing and my gifts are worth nothing! Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:3 that if you give your body to be burned and give everything that you have, but don’t have love, you are a nothing. You are a nobody! We need to recognize the importance of what Paul is saying. If you live without love – then you are a zero! You are nothing!! A zero – a nothing. Some people live for nothing because they are nothing!! They do not possess love in their hearts.

Don’t be a zero! Be something! Love! We are reminded that possession of spiritual gifts is not a sign of spirituality. The carnal Corinthians were misusing their gifts for

person edification and in doing this were not exhibiting true love toward the saints. This caused Paul to remind them that love is to be the foundation of the gifts and love would last long after the spectacular gifts would disappear out of the church.

A third-grade science teacher asked one of her students to describe salt. "Well, um, it's...", he started, then stopped. He tried again. "Salt is, you know, it's..." Finally he said, "Salt is what makes French fries taste bad when you don't sprinkle it on." You know, many foods are like this -- incomplete without a key ingredient. Imagine pizza without cheese or popcorn without butter. The Christian life also has an essential element: love. Yes, without this essential element of love, life is empty. Your life becomes a zero. You are nothing.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul is speaking about the "agape" love. It is a love that loves without changing. It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting repayment. It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing. It is love that loves even when it is rejected. Agape love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the love that is given. It gives because it loves; it does not love in order to receive.

Again, the love we read about in 1 Corinthians 13 is a Holy Spirit produced love. In other words, the Holy Spirit produces this fruit in our hearts as we are filled or controlled by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18) and walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25). The "fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22). 1 Corinthians 13 is giving us an explanation of what love is all about. Some call it a definition of love but I think this is more of a general explanation of how love is expressed.

The character of a godly woman and mother is love. This character trait of love is described in various ways.

1. Love expresses itself in patience ("suffereth long") - 4

Patience flows out of love. You have heard the expression that says "patience is a virtue." Well, it's true! This expression of love is passive – non retaliating. Longsuffering is a very powerful word and means "to not lose heart; to persevere bravely while enduring trouble and misfortune; to bear the offenses and injuries of others; to be slow to punish and slow to anger; to demonstrate self-restraint when provoked." We need to remember this in the context of the local church setting.

Patience is an integral part of a pastor's life and of all our lives as we serve together. Impatient preachers will drive people out of their churches and not give them the opportunity to learn doctrine, grow in the area of sanctification, and improve in their spiritual lives and walk. Many times are far too harsh with others instead of being patient with them.

2 Timothy 2:24

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.”

The word for patience describes manifesting a state of emotional calm or quietness in the face of provocation, misfortune or unfavorable circumstances. Love never says, “I've had enough.” As a mother, you certainly need to cultivate this particular manifestation of the Spirit in your life. Do you need a lot of patience with children? Yes, indeed! They take a lot of your time and they do try your patience! But, the Holy Spirit can certainly develop this character trait of love in your heart as you raise your children. They often say, they'll know we are Christians by our love. But let's get specific today. They (your children) will know you are a mother by your love! Believe me, they will look back and thank you for loving them and demonstrating that to them by being patient.

Ladies, love is patient! That means you must learn to not be aroused when your husband keeps the pantry door open in the kitchen! My wife is constantly reminding me of this! Close the pantry door. Patience is love in action! The person with love patiently endures with others that may cause themselves difficulty and hardship. It is willing to suffer rejection without retaliation. Paul states that love does not take revenge. It is patient.

I used to watch the old bugs bunny cartoons on Saturday morning. One cartoon promoted something called the Tasmanian Devil. He was a creature that always came whirling into the picture, spinning around at high rates of speed. Some Christians act like this Tasmanian Devil. They are wound up about everything and spinning in every direction. They have no time for the fruit and virtue of loving patience to be produced in their lives. Stop spinning around in life! Learn to be patient and express longsuffering toward people. It will pay off! Love is not short-suffering – it is long-suffering.

Agape love expresses patience toward the shortcomings and irritations of each partner in a marriage. It expresses patience toward the saints. Nobody is perfect in a marriage or home. We should always seek to improve and be better but we will always have some rough edges that we must work on. Love is patient. It does not give up on others and throw in the towel. A Spirit-taught and Spirit-produced love continues to bloom in places where one would think love could not grow. I often have weeds growing through the cracks in my sidewalk. Love is like a weed that keeps growing in every place and every situation. Love continues to grow in spite of great odds. It blooms in the places you would least expect.

2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

God is loving and He is patient. The same should be true of His children.

During the early days of the Civil War, Edwin Stanton was outspoken in his criticism of Abraham Lincoln. He held Lincoln in utter contempt, calling him a gorilla and a cunning clown. Although he knew about the slanders, Lincoln never retaliated. And when the time came to choose someone to oversee the war effort, Lincoln chose Stanton. When asked why, he simply replied, "Because he is the best man for the job." After the president was assassinated in April 1865, Stanton stood weeping over Lincoln's body and declared: "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen." Patient love won in the end!

2. Love expresses itself in kindness (“is kind”) - 4

Kindness flows out of love! This expression of love is active – bestowing benefits on others. People do not care how much we know until they know how much we care. Kindness is a spirit of graciousness and tenderness toward others. It involves being gentle and sensitive toward others. It is expressed as an attitude toward others, what we say and our entire demeanor conveys kindness. Kindness is also expressed in acts of compassion that are demonstrated toward others. This is what makes a mother, home, and marriage sweet. Without kindness a church, home, and marriage become bland – like pretzels without salt. Mark Twain called kindness "a

language that the deaf can hear and the blind can read." Don't forget the Golden Rule in your marriage. It is God's rule of kindness.

Jesus said in Luke 6:31

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

In other words, do unto others as if you were the others! Be kind!

Perhaps you've seen this famous quote:

"I shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it, or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Kindness means that you are pleasant to live with it. Toast without jelly is simply not right! Something is missing on the toast if you don't sweeten it up. Some of you need to put some jelly in your marriage again! It may be like dry toast! You need to sweeten it up with kindness, being tender and gracious toward each other. In fact, some of you men only call your wife "honey" when you want her to do something for you! This is not love. Love is kind because it reaches out to others selflessly with actions that are fueled by deep affection.

Kindness is the opposite of nagging, of being inconsiderate, of sarcasm, selfishness, pouting, losing your temper, calling each other names, and not forgiving. It is the opposite of dredging up the past and harboring bitterness in your heart. Kindness is being thoughtful to your spouse, being helpful, having a sweet spirit, being pleasant, praising them, thinking of ways to show appreciation, and being selfless.

"Lord, grant me a loving heart,
A will to give and share,
A whispered prayer upon my lips
To show I really care."

A primary ingredient for a successful home and marriage is the expression of kindness toward one another. God is the prime example of someone who has expressed kindness toward others.

Ephesians 4:32

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

As a mother and wife, are you pleasant to live with? Do you possess a demeanor of kindness, actions of kindness, and words of kindness? Are you tender and gracious?

“Of all the special joys in life,
The big ones and the small,
A mother's love and tenderness
Is the greatest of them all!”

Kindness keeps our heads "cool" and helps us to think more clearly without being confused by fury and rage. As a mother, you need to be gracious and tender toward your children, husband, and coworkers. God wants all of us to express kindness in our everyday life – at home, at work, on the job, in the church. People respond to kindness. A kind thought, word, and gesture goes a long way! There is no replacement for Spirit-produced kindness! Gentle or kind words fall lightly, but they have great weight. Kindness is Christianity with its working clothes on.

Someone said:

“A good rule for going through life is to keep the heart a little softer than the head!”

If you have been unkind then you are the wrong kind. We need to examine ourselves and see if we have been allowing the Holy Spirit to produce kindness in our hearts. It has often been said: “Money will buy a fine dog, but only kindness will make him wag his tail!” Mom, be kind to your children. Don't become mean and ugly and unruly toward them. Kindness goes a long way in raising your children.

Remember the words of Proverbs 15:1:

“A soft (kind) answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”

Ephesian 6:4, in a similar way, states this: “provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The lubrication of kindness goes a long way in keeping things functioning properly in a marriage and home. As a mother and wife, and as a godly woman, God has called you to express kindness in your demeanor, actions, and attitudes in life. The kindness that is

demonstrated through your love for people will brand their hearts and memories of you with tender thoughts.

One man shared this touching incident. "In the heart of Africa, among the great lakes, I have come across black men and women who remembered the only white man they ever saw before — David Livingstone: and as you cross his footsteps in that dark continent, men's faces light up as they speak of the kind doctor who passed there years ago. The people could not understand him but they felt the love and kindness that beat in his heart." What a great testimony for Christ this missionary had for the Lord. He had this testimony because he was kind! Love is kind!

"O to be like Him, tender and kind,
Gentle in spirit, lowly in mind;
More like Jesus, day after day,
Filled with His Spirit, now and always."

3. Love expresses itself without jealousy ("envieth not") - 4

Paul begins with two positive expressions of love but not moves to some negative descriptions about love. When you love someone, you will not be jealous, angry, or coveting what God has given to them. True love does not express jealousy toward other people over their position, talents, money, or placements in life. True love praises others for God's blessing upon their lives. It does not seek revenge or try and compete with them because of a jealous spirit. Listen, if you get a 10,000 dollar raise next year, I'll thank God with you all the way to our local Shady Maple Smorgasbord. You are treating of course! We will have a great time rejoicing together! You see, when you love someone, you will be thrilled for them when they are blessed or excel in life. When you are jealous, however, your love flees from your heart and people end up being hurt.

Philippians 2:3 says:

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

As a mother or wife, you should be happy (not jealous) when your husband is doing well financially, even though you are making minimum wage. You should be happy when your children are excelling and doing well in school, even though you might

have struggled. You should be grateful when you see others growing spiritually and excelling in their Christian life. You should be thankful when your children or husband are praised for their accomplishments. Jealousy puts a stronghold on our personal life, our marriage, and the home life in general. Envy and jealousy appears most often when we find ourselves up against people in the same line of ministry, service, or activity we are involved with, but they are doing it better than we do.

James 3:14-16 gives this warning:

“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

Jealousy is rooted in the sin nature and is satanic because it is fueled by demons. There is no love in jealous spirit. Jealousy was one of the sins hurting the church at Corinth. The people had divided into factions because they were jealous of one another's gifts. Each believer strove for preeminence. Paul therefore instructed them to follow the "more excellent way" of love (1Cor 12:31), telling them that "love does not envy" (1Cor. 13:4).

There is a fable of an eagle which could out fly another, and the other didn't like it. The latter saw a sportsman one day, and said to him: "I wish you would bring down that eagle." The sportsman replied that he would if he only had some feathers to put into the arrow. So the eagle pulled one out of his wing. The arrow was shot, but didn't quite reach the rival eagle; it was flying too high. The envious eagle pulled out more feathers, and kept pulling them out until he lost so many that he couldn't fly, and then the sportsman turned around and killed him. Here is the point, if you are jealous, the real person that is hurt is yourself. Your spiritual life is hindered. Where there is genuine love, there is the absence of jealousy.

D. C. Egner, writing in the Daily Bread, once said:

“If we resent the success and accomplishments of others and find ourselves striking out at them with damaging words or insidious innuendoes, we have a problem with jealousy. But God wants to administer the antidote of love. That alone will keep us from becoming jealousy's victim.”

How do you respond to the good fortunes of others? Can you lose gracefully? Can you walk away from the contest without bitterness? How do you react when other

Christians receive blessings or benefits that we lack? Do you allow the sparks of envy to burn and then come to a full flame?

Ray Pritchard shares this:

“If you live long enough, you'll probably find someone who does what you do better than you can do it. You'll meet people with your talents and your gifts-only much more of them. You'll find people who surpass you in every way. What will you do then? This is one test of love. And if you live long enough, you are certain to encounter people who are less talented and less gifted than you in every way, yet they seem to catch all the breaks and end up ahead of you in the great game of life. How will you respond when an inferior person passes you by? This is an even sterner test of love.”

4. Love expresses itself without boasting (“vaunteth not itself”) - 4

This is the person who bloviates about himself. The emphasis is on boasting which comes from pride. It is a boastful and egoistical type of person. This person is stuck on himself and is always talking about what he has accomplished and does in life. Have you ever met a person like this? You talk to them about the weather and they end up talking to you about themselves – their accomplishments and what they have done. Love does not bloviate! Love is not pompous. It doesn't sing its own praises. Love does not “pat itself on the back.”

This means we should not put ourselves on display and live for the notice and applause of other people. It means we should not boast about getting the biggest paycheck in the home or boast about our achievements in life over others. It means that we should not pit ourselves against others and try and make them look small while advancing our own life, agenda, and self. Beware! We can develop a boastful attitude that centers on our pride. When I boast of my talents, gifts, money, position, and abilities, I am bloviating and promoting myself instead of God's glory.

I remember my days of ping pong at the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music. In college, we used to always have ping pong duals. I recall playing one individual on several occasions. Whenever I would get a good shot passed him, he would say things like this: “Great shot, good hit, good game!” He possessed an attitude of humility and never elevated himself. Instead, he sought to build up others. As a mother and wife, your goal should be to praise others and not yourself. Center your attention on others (your husband and children) and seek to encourage

them and lift them up. Life is not about you. It's about reaching out to others and seeking to enhance their spiritual lives. Life is not about "Looking at me" but it centers on "looking at others" and their interests and needs.

Jesus set this loving example for us in Philippians 2:7-8:

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Being boastful is not being like Jesus! Jesus looked on our needs and gave Himself for us. In fact, He looked beyond our fault and saw our need!

5. Love expresses itself without arrogance ("puffed up") - 4

The emphasis from this word is on possessing an arrogant spirit which is fueled by pride. An arrogant person is someone who talks about themselves, promotes themselves, and praises themselves for they have "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). This ugly trait of puffing one's self up, of overestimating or of flaunting one's self was clearly a problem in Corinth. Love is not puffed up. It is not filled with the arrogance that stems from pride. Arrogance is devoid of love and love is devoid of arrogance.

Our children used to eat a lot of puffed rice cereal while growing up. It was a cereal that was puffed up into little balls that could be easily swallowed. We would put it on the tray of their high chair and it would keep them busy while we ate our meal. Some Christians should be nicknamed puffed rice! This is because they have an inflated ego of themselves. They are proud of their accomplishments, their trophies, abilities, advancements, money, and position in life. Love is can never be manifested through pride and haughty spirit. It isn't witnessed through a display of arrogance or conceit. Let's face it, no one likes to be around someone who always seems to be patting himself on the back.

You will notice that the middle letter in the word "pride" is the letter "I"! When we are boastful about ourselves and accomplishments, it's because we have pride in our hearts. We think we are something, when in reality we are nothing without the grace of God and His blessing upon our lives. Everything we have comes from God (abilities, gifts, money, position). We have no room for pride. We sometimes think we are something, but let me tell you, we are nothing! We are nothing without God's aid and hand of blessing. So, there is no room for pride!

Proverbs 16:18

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”

Dwight L. Moody used to say: “Be humble or you'll stumble.” 1 Timothy 3:6 reminds us that a bishop is not to be: “a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Watch out for pride. It has a way of coming out of the closet when you think you have it licked.

Many years ago I was at the home of Pastor Abram Gish – the teacher of a Scofield Bible Class. He was having a class and I wanted to be there and get in on the learning. He sent booklets everywhere. I remember going down into the basement with his lovely wife. They had been married and serving together for many years. She was talking about the ministry and the wonderful things she had done. Immediately she stopped and looked at me and said, “I think the devil brought a prideful thought before my mind and I need to stop boasting about what I have done.”

1 Corinthians 1:31

“That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

We have nothing to boast about. It's not what we have done but what God has done through us and therefore He should get all the glory! As a mother, wife, and Christian woman, you must remember that life is not about you – but others (your children, your husband, your Christian friends. Agapa love is reaching out to them and serving others. Being proud and boasting is the polar opposite of agape love!

When a victorious Roman general arrived back in Rome, he was given a hero's welcome and a triumphant parade of victory. But a philosopher was hired to ride beside him in the victory parade. As the victor acknowledged the cheers of the crowd, the philosopher kept whispering in his ear: "You are mortal. You are mortal." Friend, we are nothing without Him but everything with Him. Let's keep our hearts right. All of us need to understand that if we blow up our own balloon of boasting, sooner or later, someone will pop it.

According to a story in the Grand Rapids Press, the owner of a small foreign car had begun to irritate his friends by bragging incessantly about his gas mileage. So they decided on a way to get some humor out of his tireless boasting, as well as bring it to an end. Every day one of them would sneak into the parking lot where the man kept his car and pour a few gallons of gas into the tank. Soon the braggart was

recording absolutely phenomenal mileage. He was boasting of getting as much as 90 miles per gallon. At one point, they stopped putting fuel in his gasoline tank. The poor fellow couldn't figure out what had happened to his car. What happened to the braggart? His bubble got popped!

6. Love expresses itself without rudeness (“Doth not behave itself unseemly”) - 5

The word “unseemly” means that love does not act in an unbecoming manner. Love is polite and proper. This means that love does not engage itself in actions that are disrespectful and indecent. It behaves properly. It is characterized by good manners, politeness, and a concern for how one’s actions effect other people. Love knows how to behave as a gentlemen and lady. Love is too gentle and sensitive to even consider doing anything that will bring shame or embarrassment to another person.

Acting in an unseemly or rude manner would include such things as cursing, dirty jokes, and using vulgarity while addressing others. There is a lot of that going around today. The Bible condemns this type of speech (Eph. 4:29). Love is not crudeness or rudeness. As a Christian, you show love to others when you do not express actions and attitudes of rudeness toward them, such as outbursts of anger, words that destroy and hurt, and other improper actions and attitudes. “A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25:11).

“Button up your lip securely
'Gainst the words that bring a tear,
But be swift with words of comfort,
Words of praise, and words of cheer.”

As a wife, what happens when you express anger toward your husband and become like a tyrant wanting to gain control over him? Your marriage suffers because you are behaving in an unseemly or rude manner. Agape love does not take advantage of others in any way. It always acts in kindness and out or respect. It does no behave in a manner that is revengeful, overbearing, and inconsiderate toward others. As a mother, you need to remember this when raising your children. Your behavior or deportment toward your children needs to be respectful, loving, and kind – not overbearing and obnoxious. Being rude is not being a loving person. Now I know

that you need to “get on your children” at times. But we can do this without being overbearing and becoming a tyrant over their lives. Don’t be rude; be real!

I read of a man who was generally lacking in manners. He never opened the car door for his wife. “She doesn’t have two broken arms,” he would say. After many years of marriage, his wife died. At the funeral, as the pallbearers brought her casket out to the hearse, the husband was standing by the car door. The funeral director, who knew the husband by name, called out to him and said, “Open the door for her, will you?” He reached for the car door and then, for one second, froze. He realized that he had never opened the door for her in life; now, in her death, it would be the first, last, and only time. A lifetime of regret came crashing down around him. Love is not rude!

7. Love expresses itself without selfishness (“seeketh not her own”) - 5

Love does not live to get its own way! In other words, when you truly love someone, you don’t always get your way. You reach out to the needs of your marriage partner. Love doesn't insist on its own way but constantly insists on seeking the well-being of others. Love is bipartisan (seeking the welfare of others) – not partisan (self-seeking – wanting our own personal gain). There is a lot of partisanship going on in Washington these days.

Here is the dictionary definition of a partisan: 1. an adherent or supporter of a person, party, or cause, esp. one who shows a biased, unthinking allegiance. 2. a member of a guerrilla band engaged in fighting an occupying army! Love is not partisan. It is willing to reach across the aisle and meet the needs of others. Men, this means that love gladly takes her shopping to the Joann Fabric store. Yes, you read this correctly! Joann Fabrics! As a mother and wife, this means your focus should be on reaching out to the needs of your children and husband

Titus 2:4

“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.”

The loving mother is not self-seeking or self-serving. Ladies, you should not act like you are living in a bubble all by yourself. As a Christian woman, you should

remember that your life should revolve around meeting the needs of others. This by the way is a fulfilling life.

Proverbs 31:14 records this of the beloved mother:

“She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.”

True agape love has its focus on the needs, well-being, and good of other people. It is not self-directed or self-oriented. No marriage partner should live for themselves (“Let the husband render due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband” - 1 Cor. 7:3). A person who lives in their own world will not have a marriage that is wholesome and fulfilling.

Some people tell their pastor, “My marriage is no longer working.” I usually respond in two ways, “It’s not my marriage; you should say it’s “our” marriage (a marriage that involves two people living together). And then I usually say, “Isn’t love working in your marriage?” Does not love work – a Spirit-taught and Spirit-wrought love? Love is not selfish – it’s not self-seeking! It takes the Holy Spirit to make a marriage function properly. It takes the Holy Spirit to help a mother realize her loving calling and sacrifice for her children. It also takes love operating in a church ministry to keep the local church working and serving together with right attitudes and hearts. Love keeps people from backbiting (gossip), it keeps people from causing unwarranted division and disruption in a ministry. Why? It’s because love does not seek its own! Yes, they will know we are Christians by our love, by our love – not by our shove! True love is willing and ready to make sacrifices. It’s not selfish.

In the book, *Love is a Costly Thing*, Dick Hills recounts an experience of selfless love that he had in another country of a lady that was lying on the ground one day. In her arms she held a tiny baby girl. Here is what he shared. “As I put a cooked sweet potato into her outstretched hand, I wondered if she would live until morning. Her strength was almost gone, but her tired eyes acknowledged my gift. The sweet potato could help so little -- but it was all I had. Taking a bite, she chewed it carefully. Then, placing her mouth over her baby's mouth, she forced the soft warm food into the tiny throat. Although the mother was starving, she used the entire potato to keep her baby alive. Exhausted from her effort, she dropped her head on

the ground and closed her eyes. In a few minutes the baby was asleep. I later learned that during the night the mother's heart stopped, but her little girl lived."

Here is the point. Love focuses on others. It is willing to make sacrifices, even give up one's own life. This is what Christ did for us on the cross!

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
what wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul!"

Love is not selfish.

8. Love expresses itself without being irritable ("is not easily provoked") - 5

Love is not short-tempered. It isn't irritable, temperamental, touchy, thin-skinned, or easily offended. The word "provoked" means "to arouse, burn, or be enraged with anger, to irritate, scorn, despise, provoke, or to be touchy." This means that love does not have a quick boiling point or does not quickly fly off the handle.

Did you ever meet someone who was sitting on a powder keg and would blow up very easily if something did not suit them or go right? When the Bible says love is not easily provoked, it means that love has a long fuse! Love has thick skin. It is not "provoked" or easily stirred up to anger and retaliation. Love does not fly off the handle and retaliate. A Spirit-produced love is not easily overcome by anger that retaliates and lashes out at other people.

Maybe you are the type of person that walks on eggshells. You tread lightly and the slightest opposition or difficulty sets you off. If this is the case, then you are not manifesting love in your heart and life. Ladies, love does not raise its voice when he might raise his voice. Love does not fly off the handle just because our interests are crossed, our time is interrupted, or our desires have been put off. Love has a long fuse. By the Spirit's enablement we can stop walking on eggshells, waiting for something to set us off at a moment's notice. As a mother, have you been too

irritable lately? Maybe the children are driving you crazy all the time. Maybe everything has been getting to you? You are snappy, snippety, and snarling all the time! If so, you may need to rekindle love in your heart once again. Jesus was not easily provoked to anger. On the cross, He cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 24:34).

In the spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play a routine baseball game against the Red Sox. But what happened that day was anything but routine. The Orioles' John McGraw got into a fight with the Boston third baseman. Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl. The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands. Among the fans the conflict went from bad to worse. Someone set fire to the stands and the entire ballpark burned to the ground. Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well.

Keep your temper in check. Don't be easily provoked!

Ephesians 4:31

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."

Colossians 3:8

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

The story is told of a child psychologist who spent many hours constructing a new driveway at his home. Just after he smoothed the surface of the freshly poured concrete, his small children chased a ball across the driveway, leaving deep footprints. The man yelled after them with a torrent of angry words. His shocked wife said, "You're a psychologist who's supposed to love children." The fuming man shouted, "I love children in the abstract, not in the concrete!" Of course, we can all be guilty of this. We can agree in principle with the concept of love but can fail to express it to others with the people we live with or work with every day.

9. Love expresses itself without holding grudges ("thinketh no evil") - 5

The construction in the Greek language of "thinketh no evil" has the idea of recording someone's wrongs. It is an accounting or book-keeping term. It means

"to reckon, compute, to keep an account." It means literally to take an inventory and recount over and over again what that person has done against you. Metaphorically it involves a person constantly recording (recalculating) in their mind or thinking all the wrongs that another person has committed against them with the mindset that they need to get even. It means you are holding grudges against a person instead of forgetting and forgiving them. When true love is working in our hearts, it does not keep a ledger of all the wrongs that have been done against us, with the view of getting even with the people who have wronged us. If you truly love someone, you don't keep score, or a mental checklist of the wrongs that someone has done against you.

Warren Wiersbe said he once knew a man who actually kept a written list of the rotten things people had done to him. He also said that man was one of the most miserable people he had ever known!

Ray Pritchard wrote:

"Many people keep mental lists of the slights they have suffered. They never get over what happened in the past. They dwell on it, they live in it, they ferment in it, and as a result, they let the past shape their present and their future. But true love has a bad memory of wrongs done to it. Love is quick to hit the Delete key. Love is always ready to say, 'I'm putting that in the past and I'm not going to bring it up again.'"

Love does not hold grudges on others when they do wrong. In one of his news reports, Paul Harvey told about a man named Carl Coleman who was driving to work when a woman motorist, passing too close, snagged his fender with hers. Both cars stopped. The young woman surveying the damage was in tears. It was her fault, she admitted. But it was a new car... less than two days from the showroom. How was she ever going to face her husband? Mr. Coleman was sympathetic but explained they must note each other's license number and automobile registration. The woman reached into the glove compartment of her car to retrieve the documents in an envelope. And on the first paper to tumble out, in a heavy masculine scrawl, were these words: "In case of accident, remember, Honey, it's you I love, not the car."

Love is seen in forgiveness. If you truly love, you will not hold grudges by keeping a record of the wrongs that others have committed against you. Love does not keep

account of the wrongs it suffers, nor does it look for opportunities to get back at others. Love does not hold grudges and nurse resentments over past offenses. Love cannot dwell in a heart that is bitter, unforgiving, and holding on to grudges. True love will forgive its offenders. Love forgives immediately and doesn't mention someone's wrongs again. If you are one that is constantly resurfacing the past and wrongdoings that others have committed against you, then you do not have a Spirit-taught love abiding in your heart.

As a mother, you must bury the hatchet when your children lie to you about something. Once it is dealt with, don't keep record of it. Teach your children the important lessons they need to learn about lying but don't keep bringing their sin and wrongdoing before them again and again and again and haunt them with their wrong and sinful actions. The same is true for our marriages. We should not resurrect the wrongs of the past but truly put them behind us and go on and have a meaningful and fulfilling relationship. Living in the past means we are keeping records of what our wife and husband said or did that bothered us. True love "thinketh no evil" which means it does not keep a record of wrongs with the intent of someday taking revenge. When you say, "I'll forgive you but I won't forget what you have done," then you certainly are not forgiving and you are not expressing true love toward that person. Yes, we must choose to love, bury the hatchet, and forgive (Eph. 4:31-32; Col. 3:13).

Newspaper columnist and preacher George Crane tells of a wife who came into his office full of hatred toward her husband. She told the preacher, "I do not only want to get rid of him, I want to get even. Before I divorce him, I want to hurt him as much as he has me." Dr. Crane suggested an ingenious plan to get her to really love her husband. He said: "Go home and act as if you really love your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. "Make him believe you love him. After you've convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then drop the bomb. Tell him that you're getting a divorce. That will really hurt him."

With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, "Beautiful, beautiful. Will he ever be surprised!" She carried out the plan with enthusiasm. For two months she showed love, kindness, listening, giving, reinforcing, sharing. When she didn't return, Crane called her, "Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?"

"Divorce?" she exclaimed. "Never! I discovered I really do love him." You see, her actions had changed her feelings. Her motion resulted in emotion and brought out her true love for her husband.

10. Love expresses itself in purity ("rejoiceth not in iniquity") - 6

True love does not rejoice in lawlessness, wrongdoing, or unrighteous actions. It is pure in its pleasure. First, this means that love doesn't get any pleasure out of the failures and misfortunes of others. Love is never glad to hear bad news about another person. Love never says, "Well, they finally got what they deserved." Love is never happy to hear that a brother or sister fell into sin. Love does not enjoy passing along bad news. As a wife, when you truly love your husband, you do not rejoice in his failures. You do not rejoice when he loses his spiritual edge. If something bad happens to another, love doesn't gloat and say, "See, I told you so." "They deserved what they got!" Love does not rejoice at the calamities of others, even those people that might oppose us.

Proverbs 24:17

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth."

God may choose to bring vengeance upon our enemies (Rom. 12:19) but that does not mean we must gloat and be happy over it. This is not love. We should not rejoice in the failures of others. When you love someone, you do not find pleasure in them being harmed or hurt in any way. You don't want them to be hurt, harmed, and humiliated. As a wife, mother, and Christian woman, God wants you to possess a broken heart over your family and friends, if they sin and are not doing what is honoring to the Lord. The failure of others should not cause you to hold grudges against them, it should not cause you to become a "holier than thou" type of person, and it should not result in you gloating over their failures. That is not love. Love does not rejoice in iniquity. It is not glad but sad when sin enters the lives of others.

Second, refusing to rejoice in iniquity means that true love does not find pleasure in filth, perversion, dirty stories, Rock Music, or any other carnal and indecent ways. The very nature of love means that it opposes all sinful, rebellious, and wayward living. The true nature of true love does not condone sin, compromise with sin, and

feel comfortable with sin in any way. Instead, it seeks to correct, do what is right, and honor God.

Romans 12:9 reminds us:

“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

Vance Havner once remarked:

“Sometimes we mistake compromise for charity and put up with what we should put out.”

True love seeks to purify and direct others in the right way. As a Christian woman and mother with children, you need to teach your children to reject sin, refuse to participate with sinful habits, and teach them to honor God with their lives. In doing this, you are teaching them how to live a consecrated life and a life that honors and loves God by not rejoicing in iniquity.

Psalm 78:4

“We will not hide *them* (the testimonies of God’s truth) from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.”

Many teens today are a spiritual failure because they have not learned from their mothers the true nature of love, which is to never rejoice in iniquity, never accept it, never enjoy it, and never compromise with it on any level.

Proverbs 4:14-15 would be good advice that a mother can give to her teens:

“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.”

Someone said:

“We are sent to bless the world, but never are we told to compromise with it. Our glory lies in a spiritual withdrawal from all that builds on dust.”

This brings us to our next description of love which is juxtaposed and contrasted with the previous description.

11. Love expresses itself by following truth (“rejoiceth in the truth”) - 6

Someone said:

“Find out what God likes and do it. Find out what God does not like and don’t do it!”

This sums up what it means to not rejoice in iniquity but to rejoice in the truth! Paul now returns to some positive aspects of love. Rejoicing in the truth means that love is never opposed to the truth, nor sells it out, but is always glad to see truth promoted and win out.

Proverbs 23:23

“Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”

This is an important character trait of love that is often overlooked in our personal lives, church ministries, and marriages. Love does not sweep sin under the carpet. It is always “in truth and love” (2 John 3). Love deals with sin and wrong behavior and expresses itself in a pure way and godly manner. Of course, we have already seen that love is longsuffering and not rude toward others, but this does not mean that love overlooks that which is morally and ethically wrong. For instance, love (and a loving person) will always seek to do what is right and honor God within a marriage relationship. Love does not pressure a marriage partner into any wrong behavior but seeks to lead them away from all iniquity and wrongdoing. Love is not “wishy-washy.” It does not condone sin; it counteracts sin, faces the reality of sin, and seeks to change according to God’s righteous standard. If I truly love someone, I will have a purifying or sanctifying effect on their lives.

Ephesians 5:25-26

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”

Love has moral and ethical limits. If I truly love the Lord and want to glorify Him, I won’t compromise with that which is worldly, carnal, and defames God’s character. I won’t promote sin in my life or the lives of others. I will face it head on with the truth! Love for God, the truth, holiness, and righteousness (Ps. 119:97; Amos 5:15) results in a believer refusing to compromise with iniquity, promoting sin, or condoning it in any way within his personal life, church, home, or marriage.

1 John 5:2 records:

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”

Loving God and obedience are inseparably tied together.

Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. once said:

“God uses the thermometer of obedience to test the temperature of love.”

Yes, love always does rejoice in the truth. Truth and love are inseparably bound together. They are like the heads and tails on the coin. When I love God, I express love toward Him by upholding the truth and practicing it in my personal walk with God. We are to possess a mutual relationship with others “in truth and love” (2 John 1, 3 John 1). This means that together we share the same truth and our lifestyles are consistent with the truth. Of course, the idea of loving others always involves “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) with them, even when it might sometimes hurt and cut deep.

I remember talking to a man in the Walmart parking lot who had known me for many years. He was on his second marriage and was thinking of dissolving that marriage. He was bringing up all kinds of excuses in order to wiggle out of the second marriage. After a while, when he was all finished, I spoke up and said, “You know, God has made a way for anyone to save their marriage if they really want to.” He looked at me and immediately said, “I knew you were going to say something like that.” Friend, love rejoices in the truth – in doing what is right and not what is wrong. I don’t love people when I cater to their skewed feelings, their flesh, or their faults. I love them when I am willing to tell them the truth. Love seeks to reach people with the truth, change people by the truth, and see people growing in the truth (John 17:17).

Some people today might say that you are unloving because you stand up for what is right, because you don’t agree with their musical style, because you are discerning in your Christian life, or because you are a Bible-believing, separated Christian, who does not conform to the culture (Rom. 12:2). Many people think love means I must accept all things, be all things to all people, and never complain or say anything negative! Since when does loving others mean that we must stop loving what is right and doing what is right? Since when does loving others mean I must agree with other Christians on everything? That is the left-wing version and

interpretation of love; it's not the Biblical version. I can't fully love someone else without standing up for the truth and reaffirming the truth before them with the desire to see them walk in the truth (3 John 4).

Love always rejoices in the truth in our relationships with our friends, our family, and children. As a mother, you cannot love your children in a Biblical fashion unless you teach them the truths about God, Creation, and salvation, unless you guide them in the right paths and correct them when necessary. Why? It's because love does not rejoice in iniquity but instead rejoices in the truth.

Proverbs 13:24

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

I know it's hard sometimes, but mom, you need to put the board of education to the seat of learning! "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18). You children will cry but they will look back upon those days, knowing that you loved them enough to correct them and teach them the right way.

Howard Hendricks once said:

"Your primary concern is not what they (your children) think of you now, but what they will think 20 years from now."

As a mother, don't belittle the truth and overlook your child's rebellious ways. Correct your children, teach them to follow "the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Ps. 23:3). The true character of love does not rejoice in iniquity; it seeks to restore others to a right path and does what is right. It rejoices in the truth. Remember once again that we are called to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). The truth is like medicine to the person who needs it, but love is the sugar that when added to the medicine makes it palatable.

Remember Mary Poppins' prescription:

"Just a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down."

As a mother, many will tell you today, “Don’t smother your children.” That is true. But this is no excuse to not protect our children by teaching them to rejoice in the truth and follow what is right, godly, and eternal in nature.

12. Love expresses itself in being protective (“Beareth all things”) - 7

This basically means that love keeps confidential all that is repugnant in others. Love finds ways to forgive and to forget and not exploit and expose the sins and failures of others. Jesus told the woman in John 8:11: “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” The literal understanding of “Beareth all things” in the Greek language means that love “puts a roof” over someone else. A roof protects a person from the adverse elements. Of course, this does not mean we are to build a literal roof over someone’s head! What it means is that in our love relationships of life, on a personal level, we are called upon to roof or hide and conceal the faults of others without openly exposing them and shaming them. There is a protective nature of love. Of course, this does not mean we never deal with the sin in the lives of others or seek to restore others to a rightful relationship with God.

Galatians 6:1 declares:

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Bearing all things does not mean there is never a time for church discipline for those saints who are living in open rebellion against God, so they might repent of their sins and be restored to God (1 Tim. 5:20; Gal. 2:11; 1 Cor. 5:7; James 5). Bearing all things does not mean that we cannot expose those who are false teachers (Matt. 7:15-16; Acts 20:29). It does not mean we must sweep sin under the carpet and that we can never speak against worldliness and carnality, which is running ramped in the saint’s lives, since we are called upon to “reprove the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11). Love does not mean I must put up with sin, overlook it, and never try to correct the wrong in our interpersonal relationships.

This is not what “beareth all things” means. We have just seen that love rejoices not in iniquity and always rejoices in the truth. But there is another important aspect of love that we need to remember. While always being truthful and open and honest with others, we do not become a gossip and tail bearer of the failures of others. “Love beareth all things.” What this means is that on a personal level, as

we deal with people and interact with them in life, we won't openly broadcast their sins and failures before everyone else and seek to destroy and defame them. Love is protective of a person and will not say, "Do you know the other day that I saw brother so and so go into" (you can fill in the rest). Love will not gossip about others, shoot them when they are down, openly expose them when they are struggling, with the intent of demeaning them and destroying them.

1 Timothy 5:13 speaks of the idle woman:

"And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not."

As we seek to help others and restore them and be a blessing to them, we won't broadcast their sins and failures before others. We won't throw out their dirty laundry for everyone to see. That is not love! Love beareth all things!

1 Peter 4:8 explains it like this:

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

Love does not sweep sin under the carpet but neither does it seek to openly expose the faults and failures of others in order to destroy their reputation, character, and defame them. Love is very protective! There are times we conceal the faults and failures of others. Love does not avenge wrongs that might be committed against you or seek revenge by openly exposing the faults of others. Love doesn't have the attitude, "I will make them pay for that!" Love finds ways to forgive and to forget and cover the sins of others.

As a mother, remember and practice this important character trait of love. Love puts up with a lot! It bears a lot. Love does not overly react to the faults of our children. Love does not shame them before others. As a wife, you should not shame your husband before others. Ephesians 5:33 says that "the wife see that she reverence *her* husband."

13. Love expresses itself when being positive ("believeth all things") – 7

Love is always ready to see the best in others and to give them the benefit of the doubt. It is thinking in a positive way about others. Of course, we don't have to be

naïve or gullible. At the same time, we don't have to be so pessimistic about everyone and everything.

Robertson and Plummer offer this advice when concluding that agape love covers others faults and sins "but this does not mean that a Christian is to allow himself to be fooled by every rogue, or to pretend that he believes that white is black. But in doubtful cases he will prefer being too generous in his conclusions to suspecting another unjustly." Love takes the best and kindest views of all people and all circumstances, as long as it is possible to do so. Love believes the other person is innocent until proven guilty, not guilty until proven innocent! In general, love is willing and ready to believe the best about others. It believes that they will change, that things can get better, and that God is not finished working with them! Barnabas expressed this type of positive and believing love in his heart by seeing the best in John Mark and believing that God would change this man for the better and for His glory (Acts 15:36-39). And you know what, God did change this man. Charity believeth all things.

Pastor Steven Cole writes:

"In the family, trust shows itself by not grilling the other person about every detail of his story, like an attorney cross-examining a defendant. It means believing in your kids, expressing confidence in them. I'm thankful that my parents trusted me as a teenager; it made me want to live up to that trust."

Love is thinking the best of others even when they are not perfect. As a mother, love believes that God will change her children during those days when it seems like you are constantly disciplining them. You may not see the change today but you will see it tomorrow or in the future. A mother believes that loving discipline (Heb. 12:6) will pay off. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

As a wife, love believes that God will change her children or husband and draw them closer to the Lord. Love believes in the power of God, the promises of God, and the productive transformation that God can make in the lives of others (2 Cor. 3:18). True love keeps on believing! It is always too soon to give up on others! Perhaps you have been praying for a son or daughter. True love never gives up! Love believes all things! Faith is inseparably bound to a Spirit-taught love. When all

hope seems to be lost in the natural realm, love keeps loving in the spiritual realm, love still believes.

Andrew Murray

“Faith expects from God what is beyond all expectation.”

True love possesses a positive outlook on life and others. It’s not always gloom and doom! It believes God can do the impossible. This brings us to our next point which continues the same train of thought.

14. Love expresses itself through optimism (“hopeth all things”) - 7

There is something building here. Love believes but hope also flows out of belief. The Bible goes on to say that love is very optimistic. It is hopeful. This means that I can be hopeful about my marriage partner and relationship. I won’t throw in the towel! I can know that God wants to do some wonderful things within our personal lives and marriage. Love provides this hope within our hearts. We can see good things in each other and hope for even better things. We must believe that God can and will change someone else in spite of their present failures. Love is never ready to give up on others. We must remember that nothing is too hard for God (Jer. 32:17). God wants us to continue to be hopeful and have faith in His power and transformation which can change the lives of His people and make them into what God wants them to be (Eph. 2:10).

I can manifest this type of hopeful or optimistic love within the personal relationships that I have with God’s people in the local church and those who I befriend at work. I can be hopeful that through the work of God’s transforming grace (1 Cor. 15:10) occurring in the hearts and lives of people (Phil. 1:6) that they will change and glorify God with their lives.

Psalm 71:14

“But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.”

A mother can remain very hopeful and optimistic about God changing the hearts and lives of her children. Why? Because this is the true nature of love. It is hopeful. It is optimistic. She can see God working in the hearts of her children and know that God will not give up on them. I don’t have to live without hope but can allow a

Spirit-produced love to generate great hope and optimism in my heart regarding the salvation and transformation of people's lives.

Ephesians 3:20

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

Love does not look down upon people and say, "There is no hope for you. You are washed up." It does not say, "Whatever will be will be." Love is very optimistic. It is hopeful. There is always a door of hope that is open (Hosea 2:15) when we express love toward others. Hope means expectancy when things are otherwise hopeless. Remember that just about the time we think we have failed and there seems to be no hope, God gives evidence that He is blessing. Love is hopeful in God's power and His work in the hearts of people and the situations we face in life.

Thomas Brooks said:

"A Christian will part with anything rather than his hope; he knows that hope will keep the heart both from aching and breaking, from fainting and sinking; he knows that hope is a beam of God, a spark of glory, and that nothing shall extinguish it till the soul be filled with glory."

I heard the story of a dog who stayed at the airport of a large city for over five years waiting for his master to return. Employees and others fed the dog and took care of him, but he would not leave the spot where he last saw his master. He would not give up hope that someday they would be reunited. If a dog's love for his master can produce that kind of hope, how much longer should our love make hope last within our hearts? A hope that is centered in seeing the lives of people changed by the Gospel and transformed by the Holy Spirit's power is the type of hope that never dies. Love is always hopeful.

15. Love expresses itself through persevering ("endureth all things") - 7

Many heartaches will come our way, and the desire to give up and quit will often pass through our minds. But true love that is inspired by the Holy Spirit is steadfast. A Christian who is practicing love refuses to be conquered and dismayed over the various situations he passes through in life. The word "endureth" is a powerful word which means "to remain under the load; to bravely and calmly endure ill

treatment." Albert Barnes explains this expression of love in this way: "Bear up under, sustains, and does not murmur. Bears up under all persecutions at the hand of man; all efforts to injure the person, property, or reputation; and bears all that may be laid upon us in the providence and by the direct agency of God." In other words, love is persistent and strong.

True love that is produced by the Holy Spirit grows stronger as marriage partners pass through times of adversity and stress. Difficult times may come in a marriage, sometimes relationally but also circumstantially. True love does not give up during the hard times. It continues to blossom and bloom even when times are difficult. Obviously a love that supernaturally endures like this can only be carried out by a believer who is filled with and strengthened by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

As a mother, true love endures the fighting, stubbornness, teen rebellion, and other challenges that come when raising children. But this is the point, our Spirit-directed love still remains strong in spite of these challenges and changes in others. Ladies, love endures and puts up with some of the unknown character traits of our marriage partner. Before we were married he was a prince charming and nothing was wrong with him. We are going to ride off in the sunset together on a white horse. However, after we are married we discover that not everything about him is exactly charming. There are some flaws in him. But the same is true about you! In spite of these flaws, love endures!

When we take our marriage vows, we are committing ourselves to one another, "for better" and "for worse." Or have they changed these vows as well? They are changing everything else – God, His morals, the Bible, our constitution. Let me just say, marriage is for life and it's intended to endure through all hardship and difficulties that life might throw at us. Love is not a ship full of holes waiting to sink after twenty years of marriage. You say, "I lost my love for my partner." If that is the case, you were not living on the basis of Biblical love since true love endures! It endures during trials, misunderstandings, health issues, and old age. Love should continue to endure as we grow older in spite of the physical changes in our bodies. Ladies, you should not think of trading your husband in on a new model! The same goes for the men.

You heard about the man who found a genie lamp? He and his wife were both 60 years old. So, he rubbed the lamp and asked for a wife thirty years younger than himself. The next day he woke up and looked in the mirror, and to his horror, he

was thirty years older - 90 years old! The genie said, "I gave you what you asked, a wife thirty years younger than yourself!" Men, be careful what you wish for.

I must be honest with you today. My love for my wife has grown deeper and richer over the years. This is because true love endures! Christ's love for His disciples remained strong for "he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). This should also be true in relation to our walk with God. When we truly love God, we will continue to follow Him and do what is right even during the hard times. True love endures. This is why we sing:

"Sweeter as the years go by
Sweeter as the years go by
Richer, fuller, deeper, Jesus' love is sweeter
Sweeter as the years go by!"

16. Love expresses itself with undying commitment ("Charity never faileth") – 8

Because faith believeth, beareth, hopeth, and endureth all things, it cannot be destroyed. True love can never die. It can never fail or be lost. It can never be driven out of our heart and stop working. A Spirit-produced and Spirit-taught love will not become inefficient and ineffective. It will continue to bloom and live on. It will continue to manifest itself through youth, health, sickness, and old age. It will continue to blossom in the hard times and trying times. A love for God, a love for church ministry, a love for our marriage partner, and love for our children should never fail to manifest itself within our heart. In fact, it cannot die, when it is produced by the Holy Spirit. Love is forever! You can't kill true love.

Song of Solomon 8:7 says:

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

Love lives on. It is evidenced by an unwavering and undying commitment. This is because the Holy Spirit lives within us (1 Cor. 6:19), and when we yield to Him and are controlled by Him (Eph. 5:18), we won't stop loving. Love has a tough shell. It is evidenced by an unwavering and undying commitment. Friend, it is never too late for any of us to learn how to love! As a mother, remember the importance of expression Biblical love toward your family. An unknown author wrote, "Of all the gifts that life has to offer, a loving mother is the greatest of them all."

“Lord, teach us the secret of loving,
The love You are asking today;
Then help us to love one another -
For this we most earnestly pray.”

Remember:

“Nothing is more costly than loving - except not loving.”

Years ago, my wife and I had a medical visit down in the Paoli area. We were tired and hungry, so we stopped at a Mall and ate at Chick-fil-A. As we were sitting in the eating part of the mall, I noticed that they had live trees growing inside. It was winter time and there were green leaves still hanging on these trees. It seemed that the leaves on these particular types of trees remained green forever and did not fall off the trees.

I thought to myself, what a beautiful way to describe love – it never fails. Psalm 1:3 explains it like this: “his leaf also shall not wither.” If the leaves are following off in your marriage and personal relationship with God, then you must yield to the fruit of Holy Spirit once again (Gal. 5:22) and allow love to bloom in your heart and life. If your love for Jesus Christ has cooled (“thou hast left thy first love” - Rev. 2:4), then reinvigorate and refresh that love. Your love for the Lord will then spread to others (1 John 4:7-8; 5:2).

Can you honestly say these words from your heart?

“I love Thee Lord Jesus with all of my heart
I love Thee Lord Jesus with all of my heart
For dying on Calvary for giving me victory
I love Thee Lord Jesus with all of my heart.”

Yes, love never fails!

How can we live this way? How can we truly love without envy, without a quick temper, without seeking our own interests, and without thinking evil of others? How can we be patient, gracious, and kind when situations dictate otherwise? The answer is, we can't! In ourselves we have no power to live this way. We don't say, “I'll give it the old college try and really go out there and love everyone I meet.” We

will never talk ourselves into loving this way. It takes the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), experiencing the supernatural power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8) in our daily lives, which enable us to love in the way described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

I want you to take an inventory, a hard look at your life, as I close out this study. You can do this as you honestly answer these questions which deal with the nature of true love, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

- ✓ How patient have you been with others?
- ✓ Have you been expressing kindness to others in various ways?
- ✓ Is there any hidden jealousy in your heart toward someone else?
- ✓ How do you respond to the good fortunes, talents, gifts, and advancements of others?
- ✓ Are you quick to boast of your accomplishments before others?
- ✓ Do you really want God to be glorified in your life and everything that He does through you?
- ✓ Have some of your actions toward others been disrespectful and indecent from an ethical perspective?
- ✓ Do you possess a revengeful spirit?
- ✓ Are you often overbearing and inconsiderate toward others?
- ✓ Have you been self-seeking and not willing to make sacrifices with others?
- ✓ Are you irritable, temperamental, touchy, thin-skinned, or easily offended?
- ✓ Do you have a short temper?
- ✓ Do you calculate the wrongs that people have done against you, harbor bitterness in your heart toward them, and want revenge?
- ✓ Have you forgiven and forgotten the injustice someone has committed against you?
- ✓ Do you sometimes rejoice in what is wrong instead of what is right?
- ✓ Is your pleasure pure and wholesome?
- ✓ Does your life have a purifying effect on others?
- ✓ Do you enjoy seeing others fail and make a mess of their lives?
- ✓ Do you rejoice in hearing the truth, living by it, and sharing it with others?
- ✓ Have you sold out the truth by your compromise?
- ✓ Have you been ignoring some sin in your life?
- ✓ Have you been obeying God in every area of your life?
- ✓ Do you enjoy exploiting others when they are down and defeated?

- ✓ Do you gossip about others – their failures, sins, and shortcomings?
- ✓ Do you seek to protect the reputation of others?
- ✓ Do you really want others to be restored in their walk and relationship with God and excel in their Christian life?
- ✓ Are you a pessimist toward everyone and everything instead of being an optimist - looking for the best in others?
- ✓ Do you have a positive outlook on life and what God can do in the hearts and lives of other people?
- ✓ Have you given up on others?
- ✓ Have you thrown in the towel?
- ✓ Has your faith dried up?
- ✓ Do you still believe in God's power and promises?

How you answer these questions will reflect the level of your love toward others and Christ.