

THE LOVE CHAPTER  
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I bet if I asked for a show of hands right now, a lot of you would tell me that you had I Corinthians 13 read at your wedding. I know I did! It's the truest, most practical explanation I've ever read that talks not just about how love feels, but how love looks.

*Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, believes all things. Love never ends.*

Even when we truly love someone, we're going to be human. Which means, of course, that occasionally we'll be impatient and unkind. We'll hang on to resentment until it turns into bitterness. We'll be hurt and offended, and slow to forgive. And irritable? Well, yes! As I said, we're only human.

So here's the thing. Love comes from God, right? And that means that if we want love, if we want to be more loving, we have to go to the source, and be prepared to spend some time there.

Yes, I understand what it is to be busy. Schedules are tight and days are hectic. Even our kids are over-scheduled. I also know that when we have a chance to sit down and take a deep breath, what we usually want to do is rest our brains, watch something fluffy on TV, or go to bed early. These are issues every one of us struggles with. Even pastors! I spend a whole lot of time every week preparing to preach and teach, but to just sit down and read scripture that will nourish my soul? Hmm ... let me think. Not often enough.

Let's start small. As someone said once, "The battle is in the mind." And that's so true. As your day passes, pay attention and make a list of "gratitudes." Whatever happens, whatever makes you happy, whatever you see that makes you smile, bring God into it and say "thank you." At the end of the day, sit down with God and go over your list. Once we start paying attention, we'll be amazed at how much we have to be grateful for!

If you find yourself thinking about someone, pray for them. It doesn't have to be long and involved. In fact, I wonder what would happen if we quit giving God instructions and just lifted folks up to him? It can be something as quick and easy as thinking of the person and giving him to God. Or, my favorite prayer when someone's on my mind: "Lord, let them be free from suffering, and filled with peace." That works for everybody, no matter what the need is. And just those few seconds put us in touch with the source of love, Jesus himself.

I don't know about you, but when I stay in close touch with God, it's much less difficult to be patient, kind, generous, etc. And, sadly, it's easy to tell when it's been a while since I've been in touch with God! The love I have is only human, not God-fueled at all.

Jesus is with us every second! All we have to do is remember that, bring him into our hearts, and stay in close touch with him. When we do that, I Corinthians 13 becomes not just an impossible goal, but the reality of a life and heart filled with God's love.