

Learning the art of loving requires the investment of a lifetime. Elizabeth Barrett Browning once wrote, “I love you not for what you are, but for what I am when I’m with you. I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you’re making of me.” May God help us discover love in life-transforming ways.

Love is patient; love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, 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 13:4-6

1. Guard Your Spirit

We are responsible for the spirit we convey.

Love is patient

v. 4

Patience involves more than waiting. Patience speaks to how we wait and our attitude while waiting. Each of us grows in different ways at a different pace, much like plants in a garden.

Accept one another... just as Christ accepted you.

Romans 15:7

Love is kind

v. 4b

Loving kindness reveals itself in active goodwill by seeking the other’s best. The art of seeking the other’s best is not found in making the other into the form and image one partner thinks best. In blending patience and kindness, one invites God into the marriage.

2. Check Your Attitude

[Love] does not envy

v. 4. c

Love is not a competition. It does not want what others have. Nor does it wish evil for others. Love wants the best for those who are loved.

[Love] does not boast. Love makes no parade. (Moffatt)

v. 4d

Marriage is about “us,” not me. Boasting only advertises the speaker’s emptiness. Humility builds up others.

[Love] is not proud

v. 4e

Love is “big-hearted” rather than “big-headed.” Love serves/helps one another.

3. Mind Your Manners

[Love] is not rude

v. 5

Love pays attention to the other’s feelings. The way one speaks and acts toward another should reflect the Spirit of Jesus.

[Love] is not self-seeking. Love does not pursue selfish advantage (Phillips)

v. 5b

R.C.H. Lenski: Cure selfishness and you have just replanted the Garden of Eden.

Love is willing to make the needs of the one loved a priority.

4. Keep Your Cool

[Love] is not easily angered

v. 5c

Love guards against allowing things to irritate, provoke, and stir one into anger. Aristotle addressed our anger with wisdom. “Anybody can become angry—that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody’s power and is not easy.”

[Love] keeps no record of wrongs

v. 5d

Love refuses to keep books on the loved one’s mistakes. Choosing to discipline oneself not to replay wrongs in one’s mind or repeatedly speak of wrongs to the loved one; or present the wrongs to others can make significant steps toward forgiveness.

Love does not delight in evil

v. 6

Jesus-people have enough to do cleaning up our own lives without trying to correct and control others. Playing “gotcha” in marriage only pushes people away from one another.

But rejoices with the truth

v. 6b

Searching for good and developing an eye for God's transforming work speaks more to God's kind of truth than winning debates. How can God's love redeem this situation and heal this relationship?

Take a moment to read these eleven characteristics. How do you see yourself as they speak to the way you relate to those closest to you? Where do you want God to help you grow more Christ-like?

The New International Version, 1984 is the Bible translation used unless otherwise noted.

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