

1 Corinthians 13: 4-8

Why does love in our lives go from exciting to exhaustion to expired – the same love for the same person? What causes that to happen?

This lesson is about how to develop a kind of love that lasts for a lifetime; in your marriage, with your kids, with your parents, with friendships and with other believers.

That's the kind of love I want and I think the kind of love you want. We want a love that lasts longer than a 200-page romance novel or a 2-hour romantic movie love story.

In this lesson we're going to talk about that kind of love and how it can happen in our lives. There are two simple things we need to do first in order to begin the process of keeping love alive for a lifetime. Ask yourself these questions.

First question, what is love?

Question number two, How does love act?

What is love? If you think about it, love is the most misunderstood and overused word in the English language. We use the word love to describe our feelings toward many things.

- I love my car.
- I love my house.
- I love my dog.
- I love pizza.
- I love God.
- I love my mate.

So we use the word love for everything. What does the word really mean? If we're going to learn to love for a lifetime we've got to understand what the word is all about. It's difficult to give or receive love when one doesn't understand what love is.

Two popular misconceptions about love that are confusing and misunderstood are: Love is only a feeling. The truth is that love produces feelings, some very powerful ones, but love is more than a feeling. Love is uncontrollable, but the Bible teaches that love is controllable. In fact, in John 15:12, Jesus commanded that we love others. His words indicate that we do have control over who we love or don't love. God says several things about love that helps us to understand what love really is.

God says love is a choice. We read in Colossians 3:10-14, "And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him: As believers we are told to put on the new man. Verse 14 says to "put on love which is the bond of perfection." So love binds all these virtues together. Galatians 5: 22-23 tells us what we are to put on; "love joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance". Note the words "put on". Just as you have a choice as to what you want to put on to wear each morning with your natural garments, so you also have a choice as to what attitude you will put on each day. The Bible says, "to put on love" because love is a choice. Love is something you can choose to have or put on.

If love were a feeling, or just an accident, God couldn't command it to us. God commands an action in our lives. Love is a matter of conduct. It is how one acts. I John 3:18, "Let us not love with words or tongues, but with actions and truth." It's how we act toward another person that portrays our love.

Love is more than words. It is more than feelings. Unlike us, the Greeks had four words to differentiate different types of love:

1. Storge, which means natural affection
2. Phileo, which means emotional affection or friendship.
3. Eros, which means sexual attraction.
4. Agape, which means unconditional, giving, sacrificial love. When the Bible speaks of God's love for us and the kind of love we're to have for Him and for other people, the word is always agape. It's a commitment to act.

To often we love with words or tongue, but not with actions. You can talk until you're blue in the face, but your heart will always be read in your actions.

The real question is, “How is love supposed to act? And who gets to tell us how it’s supposed to act?” There are many voices trying to tell us how love is supposed to act. Secular society has their definition for love. Hollywood with all its lust has another definition as does the media tabloids. Our culture portrays another means of defining love which includes sources sometimes foreign to God’s Word. For the Christian, the Bible is the source we go to for instruction on how love acts.

1 Corinthians 13 is the Biblical definition of how love acts. It gives us a list of the actions of love. *“Love is patient, kind, isn’t jealous, doesn’t brag, is not arrogant, doesn’t act unbecomingly and is not provoked.”*

I want to take a portion of this list and use it to evaluate how healthy our relationships are in marriage, with parents, with our children and with our friends

“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love” Ephesians 4:2 (L.B.). Patience means I make allowances for the faults of another person. Patience means I take the time to wait for someone else to change. Patience means I wait for somebody to recover. We find strength and motivation to be patient with other people in God’s patience with us. God is so patient with us. We make the same mistakes again and again and He patiently forgives again and again. That’s patience!

Love is kind tells me that love is alive when it cares. Love is dying when it forgets. Love is dead when it ignores. “Love is kind” The word “kind” is a word we use often, but what does “kind” mean? Kindness means the ability to care for each other in the practical details of everyday life. Love knows how to adapt. Kindness means that I have to adapt to meet the practical needs of another person.

Colossians 3:12, *“Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience”*. Notice the word clothe. I remind you that the Greek word literally means put on. When you wake up in the morning and decide what to wear, you should ask yourself, “What kind of attitude am I going to wear today?” Paul says that kindness is a choice. It’s something you can choose to put on everyday. Kindness is love in action. Kindness is something you do. It’s a practical expression of love. It’s visible and active, not just emotional.

Ephesians 4:22, *“Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you.”* If I’m going to be kind to another person, I have to have a tender heart towards them. Have you noticed how easy it is to lose compassion for people who are closest to you, people that you live with? Kindness means I take time to forgive. God says it’s kind to “forgive one another, just as God has forgiven you.”

The only way I can have a relationship of love with God is because He’s willing to forgive me. The only way we can have relationships with each other is being kind enough to forgive each other. You’re thinking, they don’t deserve forgiveness. Of course they don’t. Neither do you. No one deserves forgiveness. That’s why it’s kind to forgive.

“Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.” This tells me that love is alive when it is secure. Love is dying when it starts doubting. Love is dead when it stops trusting. Behind these three words – envy, boast, proud – you can write, “That equals insecurity.” If you take any relationship and you add just a little bit of insecurity, you can make it very unhealthy. You might ask yourself, “What am I doing to add insecurity to the relationship? What am I doing to add insecurity with a child? What am I doing to add insecurity with a parent – an older parent that perhaps you haven’t called for three or four years?”

What a difference it might make for you to say to somebody today, “No matter what happens, no matter how ill you become, no matter what we have to go through in life, no matter what struggles or difficulties, no matter what happens, I love you.”

“Love is not rude, it is not self seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrong.” This tells me that love is alive when it’s giving. Love is dying when it’s exchanging. Love is dead when it’s taking. To love is to put yourself in a vulnerable position. C. S. Lewis states, “To love at all is to be vulnerable.” The only place outside of heaven that you can be safe from all the dangers of love is hell. Love is dangerous but it’s worth the risk not to harden our heart and live an empty life.

“Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres.” This tells me that love is alive when it acts its way into a feeling. Love is dying when it feels but does not act. Love is dead when it feels its way into an action. Have you discovered the amazing truth that your actions tremendously impact your feelings? It’s easier to act your way into a feeling than to feel your way into an action. By the way you act you can change the way you feel. That’s one of the most exciting discoveries of life.

#### **Conclusion:**

How do you keep a love alive for a lifetime? Don’t take it for granted. Keep doing the things we’ve talked about – kindness, caring, patience, time and actions, not just feelings.