

DAY 1

Love is patient

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient,
bearing with one another in love. —Ephesians 4:2 NIV*

Love works. It is life's purest and most powerful motivator and has far greater depth and meaning than most people realize. It gives courage to a coward, wisdom to a fool. It always does what is best for others and can empower us to face the greatest of problems.

Love can motivate a man to put away childish things, provide for his family, and take passionate stands for what he believes in—like crossing an ocean to fight for his country. Love can drive a woman to connect emotionally in relationships, comfort the hurting around her, protect her children, and extend her hand in kindness to those in need.

We are born with a lifelong thirst for love. Our hearts desperately need it like our lungs need oxygen. Love changes our motivation for living. Relationships become meaningful with it. No marriage is successful without it.

Love is built on two pillars that best define what it is. Those pillars are *patience* and *kindness*. All other characteristics of love are extensions of these two attributes. And that's where your dare will begin. With *patience*.

Love inspires you to become a patient person. When you choose to be patient, you respond in a positive way to a negative situation. You are *slow* to anger. You choose to have a long fuse instead of a quick temper. Rather than being restless and demanding, love helps you settle down and begin extending mercy to those around you.

No one likes to be around impatient people. Impatience overreacts in angry, foolish, regrettable ways. But the irony of anger toward a wrong is that it spawns new wrongs of its own. Anger almost never makes things better. In fact, it usually generates additional problems. It will trample on long-term relationships while reacting to short-term mishaps.

But *patience* stops problems in their tracks. More than biting your lip, more than clasping a hand over your mouth, patience takes a needed deep breath. It clears the air. It stops foolishness from whipping its scorpion tail all over the room. Patience is a choice to control your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you, and it shows discretion instead of returning evil for evil. It brings an internal calm to an external storm.

If your spouse offends you, do you quickly retaliate, or do you stay under control? Do you find that anger is your emotional default when treated unfairly? If so, you are spreading poison rather than medicine.

If you were to take off its mask, you'd see that anger is often an emotional reaction flowing out of our own ignorance, foolishness, or selfishness. Patience, however, makes us wise. It says, "Help me understand," instead of, "How dare you!" It doesn't rush to judgment, but puts our feelings on *pause* so that we can fully listen to what the other person is saying. It stands in the doorway where anger is clawing to burst in, but waits to see the whole picture before determining its best response. The Bible says, "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly" (Proverbs 14:29).

As sure as a lack of patience will turn your home into a war zone, the practice of patience will foster peace and quiet. "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute" (Proverbs 15:18). Statements like these from the Bible

book of Proverbs are clear principles with timeless relevance. Patience is where love meets wisdom. And every marriage needs that combination to stay healthy.

Love helps give your spouse permission to be human. It understands that everyone fails . . . daily. So when they make a mistake, it patiently chooses to give them more time than they deserve to correct it. Patience gives you the amazing ability to hold on during the tough times in your relationship rather than bailing out under the pressure.

So test yourself. How long is your fuse? How quickly do you adopt a bad attitude? Are you willing to wait with a smile? Can your spouse count on having a patient wife or husband to deal with? Can she know that locking her keys in the car will be met by your calm understanding rather than a demeaning lecture that makes her feel childish? Can he know that being found watching a football game won't automatically invite a loud-mouthed laundry list of better ways he should be spending his time?

What would the tone and volume of your home be like if you tried this biblical approach: "See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:15)?

Few of us do patience very well, and none of us does it naturally. But wise men and women will pursue it as an essential ingredient to their marriage relationships. That's a good starting point to demonstrate true love.

This Love Dare journey is a process, and the first thing you must resolve to do is to demonstrate patience on a daily basis. Think of it as a marathon, not a sprint. But it's a race worth running. Since we should never stop loving, we should never stop showing patience. It should be refreshed in supply every morning as the sun rises.



THE FIRST PART OF THIS DARE IS FAIRLY SIMPLE. ALTHOUGH LOVE IS COMMUNICATED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, OUR WORDS OFTEN REFLECT THE CONDITION OF OUR HEARTS. FOR THE NEXT DAY, RESOLVE TO DEMONSTRATE PATIENCE AND TO SAY NOTHING NEGATIVE TO YOUR SPOUSE AT ALL. IF THE TEMPTATION ARISES, CHOOSE NOT TO SAY ANYTHING. IT'S BETTER TO HOLD YOUR TONGUE THAN TO SAY SOMETHING YOU'LL REGRET.

___ Check here when you've completed today's dare.

Did anything happen today to cause anger toward your mate? Were you tempted to think disapproving thoughts and to let them come out in words? How did you handle that?

Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. (James 1:19)

