



THE
Love Dare



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This forty day journey cannot be taken lightly. It is a challenging and often difficult process, but an incredibly fulfilling one. To take this dare requires a resolute mind and a steadfast determination. It is not meant to be sampled or briefly tested, and those who quit early will forfeit the greatest benefits. If you will commit to a day at a time for forty days, the results could change your life, and your marriage.

Consider it a dare, from others who have done it before you.

THE SCRIPTURES SAY that God designed and created marriage as a good thing. It is a beautiful, priceless gift. He uses marriage to help us eliminate loneliness, multiply our effectiveness, establish families, raise children, enjoy life, and bless us with relational intimacy. But beyond this, marriage also shows us our need to grow and deal with our own issues and self-centeredness through the help of a life-long partner. If we are teachable, we will learn to do the one thing that is most important in marriage—to love. This powerful union provides the path for you to learn how to love another imperfect person unconditionally. It is wonderful. It is difficult. It is life changing.

This book is about love. It's about learning and daring to live a life filled with loving relationships. And this journey begins with the person that is closest to you: your spouse. May God bless you as you begin this adventure.

But be sure of this: it will take courage. If you accept this dare, you must take the view that instead of following your heart, you are choosing to lead it. The world says to follow your heart, but if you are not leading it, then someone or something else is. The Bible says that “the heart is deceitful above all things,” and it will pursue that which feels right at the moment.

We dare you to think differently, and to choose to lead your heart toward that which is best in the long run. This is a key to lasting, fulfilling relationships.

This journey is not a process of trying to change your spouse to be the person you want them to be. You've no doubt already discovered that efforts to change your husband or wife have ended in failure and frustration. Rather, this is a journey of exploring and demonstrating genuine love, even when your desire is dry and your motives are low. The truth is, love is a decision and not just a feeling. It is selfless, sacrificial, and

transformational. When love is truly demonstrated as it was intended, your relationship is more likely to change for the better.

Each day of this journey will contain three very important elements:

First, a unique aspect of love will be discussed. Read each of these carefully and be open to a new understanding of what it means to genuinely love someone.

Secondly, you will be given a specific dare to do for your spouse. Some will be easy and some very challenging. But take each dare seriously, and be creative and courageous enough to attempt it. Don't be discouraged if outside situations prevent you from accomplishing a specific dare. Just pick back up as soon as it is within your ability and proceed with the journey.

Lastly, you will be given journal space to log what you are learning, doing, and how your spouse is responding. It is important that you take advantage of this space to capture what is happening to both you and your mate during the journey. These notes will record your progress and should become priceless to you in the future.

Remember, you have the responsibility to protect and guide your heart. Don't give up and don't get discouraged. Resolve to lead your heart and to make it through to the end. Learning to truly love is one of the most important things you will ever do.

NOW THESE THREE REMAIN:

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE.

BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:13 HCSB

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

DAY 1

Love is patient

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

Love works. It is life's most powerful motivator, and has far greater depth and meaning than most people realize. It always does what is best for others, and can empower us to face the greatest of problems. 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 will inspire 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 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. Patience brings an internal calm during an external storm.

No one likes to be around an impatient person. It causes you to overreact in angry, foolish, and regrettable ways. The irony of anger toward a wrongful action is that it spawns new wrongs of its own. Anger almost never makes things better. In fact, it usually generates additional problems.

But patience stops problems in their tracks. More than biting your lip, more than clapping a

hand over your mouth, patience is a deep breath. It clears the air. It stops foolishness from whipping its scorpion tail all over the room. It is a choice to control your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you, and shows discretion instead of returning evil for evil.

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

Anger is usually caused when the strong desire for something is mixed with disappointment or grief. You don't get what you want and you start heating up inside. It is often an emotional reaction that flows out of our own selfishness, foolishness, or evil motives.

Patience, however, makes us wise. It doesn't rush to judgment but listens to what the other person is saying. Patience stands in the doorway where anger is clawing to burst in, but waits to see the whole picture before passing judgment. 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 book of Proverbs are clear principles with timeless relevance. Patience is where love meets wisdom. And every marriage needs that combination to stay healthy.

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

But 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 understanding rather than a demeaning lecture that makes her feel like a child? Can he know that cheering during the last seconds of a football game won't invite a loud-mouthed laundry list of ways he should be spending his time? It turns out that few people are as hard to live with as an impatient person.

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 do it naturally. But a wise man or woman will pursue it as an essential ingredient to their marriage relationship. That's a good starting point to demonstrate true love.

This journey is a process, and the first thing you must resolve to possess is patience. Think of it as a marathon, not a sprint. But it's a race worth running.



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 heart. 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? Was your spouse surprised by the things you didn't say?
