

## *What Did You Expect?*

### *Commitment #4 – We will commit to building a relationship of love.*

#### D. Marital Love in Action – concrete descriptions of how real cruciform love thinks and acts

1. Love is being willing to have your life complicated by the needs and struggles of your husband or wife without impatience or anger.
  - ✓ *We should remember Christ who was willing to face all the complications of life in this fallen world out of love for the Father and for us*
  - ✓ *One of the great challenges of real love is the willingness to abandon your demand for a comfortable and predictable life*
2. Love is actively fighting the temptation to be critical and judgmental toward your spouse, while looking for ways to encourage and praise.
  - ✓ *This happens when we forget who we are!*
3. Love is the daily commitment to resist the needless moments of conflict that come from pointing out and responding to minor offenses.
  - ✓ *Imagine how crushed we would be if God did that to us!*
4. Love is being lovingly honest and humbly approachable in times of misunderstanding, and being more committed to unity and love than you are to winning, accusing, or being right.
  - ✓ *An ongoing process because we are finite sinners*
5. Love is a daily commitment to admit your sin, weakness, and failure and to resist the temptation to offer an excuse or shift the blame.
  - ✓ *We must fight the temptation to believe we are more righteous than we really are*
6. Love means being willing, when confronted by your spouse, to examine your heart rather than rising to your defense or shifting the focus.
  - ✓ *We must fight the defensive instincts of our heart*
7. Love is a daily commitment to grow in love so that the love you offer to your husband or wife is increasingly selfless, mature, and patient.
  - ✓ *You will never “arrive” in this life – we will always be growing*

8. Love is being unwilling to do what is wrong when you have been wronged but to look for concrete and specific ways to overcome evil with good.
  - ✓ *We must commit not to be like little children (fine, I'll take my ball and go home) – not to return hurt for hurt, evil for evil*
9. Love is being a good student of your spouse, looking for his physical, emotional, and spiritual needs so that in some way you can remove the burden, support him as he carries it, or encourage him along the way.
  - ✓ *Find joy in studying them – their desires, needs, wants, goals, hopes, etc.*
10. Love means being willing to invest the time necessary to discuss, “examine, and understand the problems that you face as a couple, staying on task until the problem is removed or you have agreed upon a strategy of response.”
  - ✓ *Problems are an opportunity*
11. Love is always being willing to ask for forgiveness and always being committed to grant forgiveness when it is requested.
  - ✓ *We should find joy in relieving the burden of living with you by seeking forgiveness, and to be ready to forgive*
12. Love is recognizing the high value of trust in a marriage and being faithful to your promises and true to your word.
  - ✓ *We must live in such a way that our spouse is safe in trusting us*
13. Love is speaking kindly and gently, even in moments of disagreement, refusing to attack your spouse's character or assault his or her intelligence.
  - ✓ *Words would just as deeply, if not more so, than physical wounds*
14. Love is being unwilling to flatter, lie, manipulate, or deceive in any way in order to co-opt your spouse into giving you what you want or doing something your way.
  - ✓ *Love serves and gives*
15. Love is being unwilling to ask your spouse to be the source of your identity, meaning and purpose, or inner sense of well-being, while refusing to be the source of his or hers.
  - ✓ *We cannot put our spouse in the place of being our personal messiah, for it is a role they are bound to fail in and that will leave us filled with disappointment*

16. Love is the willingness to have less free time, less sleep, and a busier schedule in order to be faithful to what God has called you to be and to do as a husband or a wife.
- ✓ *We must give up our supposed rights to our time, plans and schedule to build a lasting friendship*
17. Love is a commitment to say no to selfish instincts and to do everything that is within your ability to promote real unity, functional understanding, and active love in your marriage.
- ✓ *There is probably no more important commitment of love than the commitment to say no – no to our selfishness, no to over-commitment*
18. Love is staying faithful to your commitment to treat your spouse with appreciation, respect, and grace, even in moments when he or she doesn't seem to deserve it or is unwilling to reciprocate.
- ✓ *We must learn to persevere through difficulty*
19. Love is the willingness to make regular and costly sacrifices for the sake of your marriage without asking anything in return or using your sacrifices to place your spouse in your debt.
- ✓ *Serve without the desire/expectation of return*
20. Love is being unwilling to make any personal decision or choke that would harm your marriage, hurt your husband or wife, or weaken the bond of trust between you.
- ✓ *Love means giving up your autonomy, no longer treating your life as an investment you can individually make*
21. Love is refusing to be self-focused or demanding but instead looking for specific ways to serve, support, and encourage, even when you are busy or tired.
- ✓ *We can trust the Lord to meet our needs and work to meet the needs of others*
22. Love is daily admitting to yourself, your spouse, and God that you are not able to love this way without God's protecting, providing, for- giving, rescuing, and delivering grace.
- ✓ "It is impossible for any of us to love as has been described. The bar is simply too high. The requirements are simply too great. None of us has what it takes to reach this standard. This description of love in action has left me humbled and grieved. It has faced me once again with my tendency to name as love things that are not love. It has forced me to admit how self-focused and self-absorbed I actually am. It has reminded me that when it comes to love, I am not an expert. No, I am poor, weak, and needy.

But I am not alone and because of this, the realization of failure should not defeat or paralyze you or me. No, it is meant to drive you to seek help.”

- ✓ “As John begins that long discussion of love that we have already considered in this passage, he says these words: “God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). John says that the purpose for Jesus’ coming to earth, suffering and dying, and rising from the dead is that through him we might have what we need to be able to live the life to which he has called us. And the life to which he has called us is fundamentally, comprehensively, and perseveringly a life of love. John is saying that Jesus died not only so that we would have forgiveness for not loving as we should, but also so that we would have the desire, wisdom, and power to love as we should.

“Jesus shed his blood for the conversation that started out right but has now become angry and tense. Jesus died for the daily pressure of living with someone who is very different from you. Jesus died so that you would win your struggle with forgiveness and be able to resist the seductive call of bitterness and vengeance. Jesus died so that you would have what it takes to make the decision to get out of bed and do what you promised even though you are weary and discouraged. Jesus suffered so that you could face hurt and mistreatment with wisdom and grace. Jesus died so that you would resist the temptation to give in, give up, run away, or quit. Jesus shed his blood so that you would have the power to edit your words and say what is wholesome even when you have been spoken to in ways that are unkind. Jesus shed his blood so that in specific moments you would have the power to say no to irritation and impatience and respond in kindness and self-control. Jesus died so that in the face of the death of your dreams you would take up the better dream of what he has called you to. Jesus suffered so that you would have the wisdom you need to deal with things you did not expect and don’t fully understand. Jesus shed his blood so that you would have the power to grow and change.” (p. 202)