

# keep showing up by karen ehman

## Lesson Two

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Wendy Blight



Hi, friend! So excited to spend another week of our Bible Study Companion journey with you! This week, we'll look at ways to put into practice God's command to love our husband, remembering this command to love is not a feeling; it's a call to action.

Today, we'll spend time in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and Colossians 3:12-14.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, Paul defines love:

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, 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. Love never fails"* (NIV).

The love Paul speaks of here is *agape* love, best translated unconditional love. A love that originates with God. Last week (Ch. 5, p. 105), Karen explained *agape* loves *despite*, not *because* of. It isn't tied to our emotions. It's unconditional. It expects nothing in return. It's other-centered.

Find more insight below on *agape* love from Chuck and Nancy Missler, taken from their book, *The Way of Agape: Understanding God's Love*:

"Agape is not a natural love, but a 'supernatural' Love. We can't produce this kind of Love in our own strength and ability. To love with God's Love is a matter of our will: it's a volitional choice. It's not 'I will love this person if it kills me' ... But it's: 'I choose to set my self (all my thoughts, emotions and desires that are contrary to God's) aside and allow God to love this person through me'" (p. 46).

You can be certain, if God commands us to love this way, which He clearly does in 1 Corinthians 13, He'll enable us to do it because it's *His* love. It flows from His heart and His Spirit moving and living in us.



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I want to be real here before we begin. When you live with someone every day, every week, every month, year after year, it's easy to get annoyed with them in the big things. The little things. And, all things in between, Expressing those annoyances occurs more frequently with each passing year.

I'm absolutely guilty of this. I like to go to bed every night with everything in its place (dirty clothes, shoes, backpack/briefcase, dirty dishes, blankets, computers). That's *not* how my husband, Monty, grew up. So, for the first few years of our marriage, I followed behind him, cleaning up, making little comments under my breath. Or loudly loading his dirty dishes in the dishwasher the next morning, with a few huffs and puffs along the way. But, the time finally came when I blew my top, expressed my anger outright because he knew how I felt. But, did he really? I was usually passive-aggressive with my anger.

Thankfully, as time passed and we matured, we actually talked about this. We worked out a compromise. He puts everything in its place downstairs before he comes up to bed. Upstairs, not so much. But, he tidies up when he wakes up in the morning. That's our arrangement, and it works great. And, when he forgets, I hold my tongue because I know his heart.

Not demanding our own way, and a willingness to compromise, is one way to unconditionally love our husbands.

Here are more ways we can love unconditionally:

- Humble your heart and ask forgiveness (and mean it).
- Let go of having to be right.
- Don't keep a record of wrongs; just say "I forgive you" (and move on).
- Don't call out what he fails to do ... or doesn't do *your* way.
- Don't say "I told you so."
- Speak well of him, rather than belittle him, in the presence of others.
- Speak one or more words of blessing and encouragement over him each day.
- Hold your tongue when he doesn't complete a task in your timing.



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Examine this list. Which of these have you put into practice? Write it below and pat yourself on the back! May you hear, “Well done, good and faithful daughter, for loving your husband in ways I ask you to.”

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Choose one (just one) of the ways that you struggle to love unconditionally and commit to live it out this week. Journal below what you experienced as you walked in obedience to God’s command.

**I’ll go first.** 1 Corinthians 13:5b says, “... [love] keeps no record of wrongs” (NIV). I struggle with this one. Not just in my marriage, but anytime someone I love hurts me over and over again. I tally up my hurts. But, I’m learning relationships, especially marriages, have no room for scorekeeping. It causes division and strife and, if left unchecked, tallying will leave a devastating path of wreckage in its wake.

To avoid this temptation to tally, we must ask God for help ... for an extra filling of His love when we struggle with what we perceive as hurts and wrongs committed against us. As much as we want to marinate in our anger, our heart has to *want* to please God more than we want to be right, wounded or angry.

For me, I kept a record of wrongs because this is what my family modeled. My mom, even to this day, always assigns blame. My husband noticed this habit the more time he spent with my family, including my extended family. Once again, Monty and I sat down and talked through this. It has helped so much.





Now let's spend time with Colossians 3:12-14, beginning with verse 14.

*“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (NIV).*

Here's the same verse in The Message:

*“And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.”*

Just as we chose the clothes we put on today, we must choose to “put on” the attitude of love. Even on the days we don't feel like it. Choosing love over anger. Over bitterness. Over unforgiveness. Over resentment. Over jealousy.

Choosing love pushes out ... leaves less room for ... the negative emotions fighting to gain control of our heart.

What are “all these virtues” of which Paul speaks in verse 14? We find them in Colossians 3:12-13,

*“So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you” (The Message).*

**List the “wardrobe” (or virtues) God has chosen for us:**

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God’s all-consuming love, alive in us, equips us to live out the virtues Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 13 and Colossians 3.

Below find seven declarations to help you “put on” love when you find yourself struggling to love.

- I’ll be patient with you because I love you and want to extend grace to you.
- I’ll be kind to you because I love you and know what you need.
- I won’t be rude to you because I love you and care about what you think.
- I won’t be easily provoked because I’ll believe the best about you.
- I won’t be jealous because I love you and I trust you.
- I won’t insist on my own way because I love you and want to put your needs over my own.
- I won’t be easily angered by you because I love you and will overlook perceived offenses.

We’ve parked in some great passages today. We’ve learned the *agape* love God calls us to rarely comes naturally. Instead, it flows from the overflow of God’s love living and breathing in us. When we walk fully in *agape* love, it will override our natural selfish inclinations. The ones that cause us to be impatient, unkind, selfish, mistrusting, keep a record of wrongs and hold grudges.

Following God’s command requires intentionality. So, let’s get practical. Let’s own our attitude!

How can you be intentional and choose to “put on” love?

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Over the next five days, choose ONE action item to do each day. Journal what you chose and the result of that choice (how you felt, how your husband responded, your response to his).

- 1. Love your husband through what you've identified (or possibly identified) as your husband's love language (words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, physical touch).

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- 2. Serve your husband in a way that puts HIS interests/desires/priorities before your own.

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- 3. Initiate quality time alone with your husband. A date night. A quiet dinner at home. A coffee date. A long walk. A movie after work. Play a game. Or maybe even something more romantic.

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- 4. Get to know your husband again using Karen’s “getting to know you questions” at the end of Chapter 6. A great time might be after dinner in place of watching your favorite show, reading your favorite book, or running errands. You might combine this with No. 3 above and get a two-for-one.

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- 5. Write your husband a letter of gratitude letter. For some of you struggling in your marriage, it’s hard to even think of one positive thing to say. But, trust me. Invite God to remind you ... show you ... fill you ... with words of love and gratitude to write. Maybe it’s something from the past. And pray for your husband’s heart to receive it in love. For God to tender his heart to truly receive your words as a gift. This is more about YOU and how YOU will feel by loving your husband with God’s love. No matter your husband’s response, God will be pleased. Trust God’s character. He will bless and reward you for your obedience.

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My prayer is that by the end of this week, you’ll treasure your husband more, and he’ll feel more loved and appreciated than he ever has before!



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Let's close in prayer.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me so much, You sent Your One and only Son to die on the cross for me. In doing so, You modeled lavish, unconditional love. Help me truly understand that kind of love, and walk confidently in it, each and every day. Fill me to all fullness with Your lavish love so I can be a conduit of that love to my husband. Help me "put on" love and put into practice what I've committed to this week. Bless the work of my hands and heart as I love and serve my husband as You call me to do. Open my husband's heart to experience Your love through me. Draw him closer to You and draw us closer to one another. I ask this all in Jesus' name. Amen.*