

How Will Others Know I Am God's?

It must grieve God's heart to see His children fighting over small things instead of rejoicing over big things. We fight over things that divide instead of rejoicing together over the things that unite us, such as the miracle of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, and His unconditional love, mercy, and grace toward us.

People can't even agree on the Holy Spirit. There is probably more disagreement on that very subject in the body of Christ than any other because of two extremes—people who can't even say the words "Holy Spirit," and others who allow themselves to get crazy, scary, and weird in the name of the Holy Spirit. Is it a coincidence that those two extremes least exemplify the love of God?

Those who can barely acknowledge that the Holy Spirit exists don't allow Him to pour His peace, comfort, and love into them. They don't want Him interrupting *their* plans for *their* life. Those at the other extreme are so into *themselves* and *their experience* that the last thing they are thinking about is how to show the love of God toward others.

Both camps love their experience more than they love God. I know that may sound harsh, but I have seen these extremes a

number of times in various places and, believe me, I do not sense the love of God or the presence of the Holy Spirit in either one. I sense a movement of the flesh.

The same is true for those who are loveless, self-proclaimed critics of other Christians. I am not talking about those who speak the truth into another's life because they deeply love that person and want the best for them. Don't worry if you are wondering if that is you. Those people will not be reading a book on love because the love of God is not what they are interested in. They are interested in bringing other people down and not building them up in the things of God.

A ploy of the enemy is to divide believers and pit them against one another. Imagine if we in the body of Christ were so united that we could pray in unity for whatever God put on our hearts. Think of what could be accomplished.

Love Other Believers as Jesus Loves Us

Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, *that you love one another; as I have loved you*... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). That means our love for other believers will be the main characteristic in us that demonstrates who it is we belong to and who we love and serve. It will be distinctive and defining when we consistently demonstrate the love of Jesus to one another.

The love of Jesus was *sacrificial* and *unconditional* and *unfailing* and not like any other love. His love in us causes us to resolve our differences and stop separating ourselves from other believers because of nitpicky issues, prickly criticism, and gossipy defamation of character that are the opposite of Christ's love for us.

Jesus wants us to bear fruit that lasts. Part of that is becoming His disciple and assisting in bringing other people to a knowledge of Him as their Savior.

We believers are all members of the body of Christ. What affects one affects us all. We all need one another. *The key is to love others as He loves us*. Love like that is not just a chance feeling. It's a choice

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People will know that we show love for one another a man, but in our commonality to Him than any unity of spirit require humble before God, but hum

Our love and humility speak has to line up with our love for God and for Humility is recognizing how out the Lord.

Paul told the Corinthians, "I plead with you, brethren, *you all speak the same thing* but that *you be perfectly joined in the same judgment*" (1 Corin

Does that mean we all agree on lives? No, it means we agree on what He requires of us.

David said, "How good it is to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) in unity is to work things in the counsel of other strong an

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cally for you. It is the way they *are*.

People will know that we are His by our love for one another. When
we show love for one another by being in unity—not in allegiance to
a man, but in our common allegiance to Jesus—this will draw more
people to Him than anything else. This love for one another and
unity of spirit require humility. That means we are not only hum-
ble before God, but humble with one another.

Our love and humility are shown in the words we speak. What we
speak has to line up with what we have in our heart. When we show
our love for God and for others with our words, that blesses God.
Humility is recognizing how clearly pathetic our lives would be with-
out the Lord.

Paul told the Corinthians how they were to live as believers. "I
plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that
you all speak the same thing, and that *there be no divisions among you*,
but that *you be perfectly joined together in the same mind* and in the
same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Does that mean we all agree on everything and every detail of our
lives? No, it means we agree on whom we serve as Lord and what
He requires of us.

David said, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to
dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). One of the ways we dwell
in unity is to work things out together—to seek the Lord and the
counsel of other strong and knowledgeable believers.

Part of loving others is being able to drop a matter. Let it go.
Cut your losses and move on. We all have to do that at one time or
another. Prayer is the greatest unifier of all. What could happen if
we believers started praying for one another in different denomi-
nations, different cultures, and different areas so that church pride,
denomination pride, and cultural and racial pride no longer existed?
Think what God could do in His people if all "we're right and every-
one else is wrong" pride were eliminated.

David was set upon by false accusers who deceitfully attacked him with words of hatred. The worst part was that these were people he had loved, and they rewarded him with evil for good. But what did David do in the face of all that? He prayed. He said, "They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. *In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer*" (Psalm 109:3-4).

He prayed instead of reacting. He went to God instead of trying to get even.

What a lesson we can learn from that. Because we have the confidence of knowing God loves us, we can say, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?...It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:6,8). God is on your side and He knows the truth.

One of the most heartbreaking things is when a *believer* hurts you. If you both love God and He loves each of you, how do you reconcile this? You must pray for that person and for yourself. Pray that if you are wrong, God will show you. But if the other person is wrong, pray that God will reveal it to him and he will acknowledge it. The best thing would be to pray together trusting that God knows how to do what it takes to reconcile this breach.

Love Unbelievers the Way God Loves Us

Our love extended toward unbelievers will make it known to them that we don't just love our own, and that is what makes us unique. We love those who are not like us instead of rejecting them as everyone else tends to do.

The thing that keeps more people from receiving the Lord are believers who speak and act toward them without the love of God in their hearts.

That is what kept me from receiving the Lord sooner than I did. It wasn't until I was faced with the true love of God in believers that the walls came down around my heart. Because of their prayers for me to see the light, the blindness fell from my eyes. Only God's love breaks down barriers like that. Mere human love cannot.

Pray for yourself to live in you. And pray for unbelievers. Jesus said, "The world cannot hate Christians because we love them as well. Pray that what the truth about God's love is." We forfeit all God has for us if we don't say people will know us by our love. Do people know that about God? I hope so. I pray so. Let's pray by our love for one another to know Him.

Jesus said, "Everyone who loves me will keep my commandments (John 14:15-18:37). That means we can have His Spirit of truth in us by showing love to others.

Jesus said of us as believers, "I do not live by our rules and laws. I live by His love to save and set free. Our joy is in the love of God turned them off to the love of God. It is not extended. That's a shame. It is not one person at a time if not many. It is love for one another as believers. It is people who do not know the Lord."

The Bible says we are to let all we do be done with love. Let us pursue it and do it for ourselves. Let people will know whose we are.

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Pray for yourself to live in a way that the love of God can be seen in you. And pray for unbelievers to see the truth about that. Jesus said, "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil" (John 7:7). Many people in the world hate Christians because we *are* believers in Jesus. But we must love them as well. Pray that whatever is obstructing people from seeing the truth about God's love and Jesus' sacrifice will be brought down.

We forfeit all God has for us when we don't love others. Jesus said people will know us by our love for one another. But do they? Do people know that about you? Do they know that about me? I hope so. I pray so. Let's pray together that people will know us by our love for one another and also our love for those who don't know Him.

Jesus said, "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:37). That means we can hear God speak to our heart because we have His Spirit of truth in us. As a result, we can be led by God in showing love to others.

Jesus said of us as believers that we will be known by our love—not by our rules and laws. Jesus did not come to judge. He came to save and set free. Our judgment on the unbelieving world has turned them off to the love of Christ because they don't see it exhibited or extended. That's a shame. We need to change that perception, one person at a time if not more. Let's pray we will be known by our love for one another as believers and for our love toward other people who do not know the Lord. Yet!

The Bible says we are to "pursue love" (1 Corinthians 14:1) and let all we do be done with love (1 Corinthians 16:14). We don't just pursue it and do it for ourselves, but for others. That's the only way people will know whose we are.

People are drawn to those who love them. If you want your relationships to be transformed in the best way possible, ask God how you can better communicate His love in you to them.

Prayer of Love

LORD, Your Word says that it is good and pleasant for all of us who love You to live together in unity (Psalm 133:1). And that we should love one another, for when we love You and love others, it shows that we truly *know* You (1 John 4:7). Help me to be a loving uniter and not a divider. Help me to be a peacemaker, a bridge maker, and a unifier.

Teach me to speak words that lift up and bring love and peace—words that edify and cause people to love You more. Enable me to speak only that which is true, righteous, and godly. Keep me from being a negative complainer. Your Word says that godly speech brings a long, good life (Psalm 34:12-13). Help me to speak the truth about what constitutes a long, good life for others. Enable me to communicate Your love to them in every way possible.

I pray I will be known for my love for You and for other people (John 13:35). I pray that even unbelievers will know me by my love expressed to them in kindness and thoughtfulness. I pray they will be attracted to You because of it. Teach me how to “pursue love”—not only to receive it, but to look to You for the opportunities You have opened to me to show it to others (1 Corinthians 14:1). Teach me how to pray to that end so I can extend Your love to those who are dividers. Enable me to love others with a pure heart (1 Peter 1:22).

In Jesus' name I pray.

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Words of Love

You, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use
liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love
serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word,
even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

GALATIANS 5:13-14

Above all these things put on love,
which is the bond of perfection.

COLOSSIANS 3:14

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love
to one another and to all.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:12

Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,
with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering,
bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep
the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

EPHESIANS 4:1-3

Above all things have fervent love for one another,
for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

1 PETER 4:8

Isn't It Selfish to Learn to Love Myself?

Most of us are way too hard on ourselves. We beat ourselves up for everything we see that disappoints us. Women, especially, are critical of themselves. But God doesn't like that. He wants us to love the person He made us to be. He desires that we appreciate how wonderfully made we are, and so we should love all that our body, soul, and mind are able to do. He doesn't want us criticizing ourselves for what we think we cannot do or be.

I remember hearing a doctor talk about going to a foreign country to help sick children there. Many were deformed because they came from the wombs of malnourished mothers who didn't have enough to eat when they were pregnant. The next time he went to that country as a missionary, he took surgeons with him who could perform corrective procedures on the little deformed faces of those children. He said they didn't have mirrors there so they had never really seen themselves and didn't know what they looked like. They only knew the reaction of others to them. That's hard to imagine, isn't it? What would it be like to never have seen our own reflection? Most of us have been looking at ourselves in a mirror since we first saw our parents or siblings do it.

These little children were allowed to see themselves in a mirror before their surgery, and it was disturbing to them. But when they saw themselves after they were healed from their surgery, they were very pleased. They liked what was reflected back. Their confidence and joy grew as people responded positively to them.

Too often we don't like what we see in the mirror because we have compared ourselves to picture-perfect images we've seen in the media. But God doesn't want us to do that. He wants us to see *His* beauty in ourselves. He wants us to see ourselves the way *He* does. He wants us to let go of our critical attitude and see ourselves through His eyes of love.

When we receive the Lord and His Spirit is in us, God begins a spiritual surgery that reconstructs and repairs all the disfiguring things that have happened to us and the damage that has occurred because of the destroying effects of sin in our life. If we can truly see the results, we will be pleased, because His Spirit in us is beautifying.

Jesus said that we should love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. He said this is the first commandment (Mark 12:30). "And the second, like it, is this: '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31). These are the two greatest commandments, yet how many of us do not love ourselves? In fact, we are mean to ourselves when we criticize who we think we are and don't appreciate who God made us to be. We don't have a proper measure by which to determine how well we are loving others.

Let me tell you a few things about you.

First of all, you were created in God's image. So were your mom and dad, and that's why you resemble them too. When you receive Jesus, *you are a new creation.* You have a new self, and from then on you must stop trying to prop up your old self.

You are the dwelling place of God's Holy Spirit and you belong to God. You were bought at a steep price, so you must glorify God in your body and spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Your body is the

temple of the Holy Spirit. You are loved. Don't do anything to defile your dwelling place.

One of the greatest things we should cherish is that we are loved by God. We should cherish that. You have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, and He doesn't like that.

Paul said that a person should not think of himself as a measure of faith, but rather we should see ourselves on the basis of what God has made us to be, but rather we value us to be, what *He* is doing for us to fill our purpose.

Stop Saying

We want the words of God that includes the words of God. *the words of my mouth and my heart, O LORD, my God.* He was talking about a person who says and the thoughts within him.

If you are always blaming God for what you think and the words you say, how is He blessing you? You are an important part of God, God will create a temple of God, God will create a temple of God, which temple you are?" Consider. Don't let your thoughts be the One who loves you.

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One of the greatest gifts God gives us is His Spirit living in us. We should cherish that gift and also love the temple He has given us. You have the Spirit of the one, true, living, holy God of the universe dwelling in you, so refuse to be negative about yourself. He doesn't like that.

Paul said that a person should not "think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). That means we don't judge ourselves on the basis of what *we* accomplish or have made *ourselves* to be, but rather we value ourselves with regard to who *God* made us to be, what *He* is doing in us, and how *He* is enabling us to fulfill our purpose.

Stop Saying Bad Things About Yourself

We want the words we speak to always be pleasing to God, and that includes the words we say about ourselves. David prayed, "*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer*" (Psalm 19:14). He was talking about *all* of his words. That includes the words we say and the thoughts we have in our heart about ourselves.

If you are always beating up on yourself in the thoughts you think and the words you speak, how does that please and glorify God? How is He blessed when you criticize His creation, of which you are an important part? Paul said, "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:17). Strong words to consider. Don't let your thoughts and words defile the dwelling place of the One who loves you best.

I used to be guilty of saying bad things about myself. Because of the terrible words my mother often spoke to me, I grew up thinking

the worst about who I was. I was often told I was worthless and would never amount to anything. I was never told I had any positive attributes or that I was good at anything. I was never encouraged that I could be or do anything at all. In fact, I was discouraged and made to feel hopeless about my life.

I was not in a family of encouragers. They only ridiculed. But I had an aunt who made me feel as though I mattered in this world and I was not an imposition. Even so, I still ended up hating everything about myself and my life. The bad comments are always easier to believe. So I carried that self-hatred for years. It only started to heal once I received the Lord and He began to love me into wholeness. Once I was finally free of the self-hatred, I still felt as if I would always have to suffer for everything I did wrong in life. It was never easy. It was always a struggle. And I compared my life with the lives of other people. Their lives seemed remarkably easy by comparison.

It took a time of healing and learning about God's love for me, and that helped me to see the truth. I saw that we all make choices every day, and when we *choose* to live in *God's love*, and *choose* to show our *love for Him*, it affects every other choice—especially *the choice to love who God made us to be*.

No one has everything. It may seem as if some people do, but they don't. So we can't set our eyes on those who we think have so much more than we do and critically compare our lives with theirs. We don't know the whole story. Only God does.

I was extremely sick with both of my pregnancies, the second one even worse than the first. I was in bed most of the time for the second one, too sick to do anything. In the hours I spent there, I often heard the beautiful lady next door out with her perfect twin babies—a boy and a girl—that she had adopted, never having a sick or painful day at all. I allowed myself to become envious of her, comparing our situations and wanting hers and not mine. I couldn't understand why I, a believer, had to suffer so much, and she, a non-believer, did not have to suffer at all. I was so sick I couldn't even

read or watch television. Only when a friend visited, I would read the Word of God to me daily.

After my baby was born, I was given a twin stroller to show me that the little girl had to have to move out of the house. Her daughter could receive the love of her life. I was shocked.

After they left I cried. I felt a lack of appreciation for the love I had. I was embarrassed that I had been embarrassed before myself and that you this even now. I still feel that to God. It pains me to be ungrateful for what God has done. I would never again so dishonor my love and praise of Him. It was a painful moment of my life. I again to have my children. I received mercy and love toward me. It has been.

No matter what someone says, we don't walk in their shoes. And we should always remember that He has given us. No matter how many there are others who have it, there are others who don't.

We have to get up every day and be alive—no matter how bad it is. For what we *can* do instead of what we think we can't do. And if we *can* do, let's pray for

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read or watch television. That meant I wasn't reading the Bible either. Only when a friend would come over occasionally and read the Word of God to me did I have that wonderful comfort.

After my baby was born, my neighbor brought her son over in a twin stroller to show me. Her daughter was at home. She told me that the little girl had severe disabilities, and they were going to have to move out of their home and closer to the hospital, where her daughter could receive the therapy she would need for the rest of her life. I was shocked and heartbroken for her.

After they left I cried and repented before God for my envy and lack of appreciation for what He had given me. I was extremely embarrassed that I had allowed such awful thoughts. I was embarrassed before myself and before God. It's very embarrassing to tell you this even now. I still deeply regret my attitude of ungratefulness to God. It pains me to think of it. I vowed I would never again be ungrateful for what God has given me, no matter the situation. I would never again so diminish His love for me in my heart or limit my love and praise of Him. I thank God for every miserable and painful moment of my pregnancies, and I would go through it all again to have my children. I thank God every day for them. God's mercy and love toward me is beyond what I deserve and always has been.

No matter what someone else has that we think we are missing, we don't walk in their shoes. We should love them and be happy for them. And we should also love who God made us to be and the life He has given us. No matter how much we think we have suffered, there are others who have suffered more. No matter how bad we have it, there are others who have it far worse.

We have to get up every day and thank God that we woke up alive—no matter how bad we feel that day. We have to thank God for what we *can* do instead of complaining before Him about what we think we can't do. And every time we thank God for something we *can* do, let's pray for someone we know of who is unable to do

what they want to do. That is how we love others, and it will change our perspective on everything.

Stop Thinking Bad Thoughts About Your Life

If you find that you are constantly thinking critical thoughts about your life, ask God to help you find your hope in Him. If something needs to be changed and you have the ability to change it, do so. But if there is nothing you can do to effect a needed change, then ask God to do the impossible. Lay the situation at His feet. Ask Him to help you see all the good things about your life and thank Him for them. Ask Him to help you see your life and your future from His perspective. Ask Him to change what needs to be changed. He is probably waiting for you to come to Him for His help. He may want the changes *you* want even more than *you* do, but He is waiting on you to *depend on Him*. And the reason He is doing that is because He wants to take you to places you cannot get to without Him.

God has blessings for your life you cannot even imagine right now, but He may be waiting for you to be perfected in love. That is, often God waits to bless us until we bless others in the way He wants us to—by showing love to them that comes from His heart to ours. There are great blessings ahead for us when we learn to love others as He wants us to. Even those who are hard to love. And the opposite is also true. We shut off blessings God wants to give us because we have failed to love others. This is a very big issue with Him, and too many of us do not even realize it.

Don't worry. When you come to *truly* love and appreciate who God made you to be, you won't be filled with pride. You won't focus intensely on yourself. And you won't be envious of others. That's because you don't need to be. You are you and that is good. You don't need to be anyone else.

Loving yourself and your life doesn't by any means indicate that you think you're better than anyone else. It means you appreciate the good things about yourself and the life God has given you. You

realize you and your life are great things ahead. You don't compare your life to others.

No matter what your life is, unlovable, or unwanted, you have a great purpose and gifts from God. You have to be free of the things that define you. His Spirit in you is worth dying for in order to live. Don't judge yourself by your past. Just because things happen, they will happen that way. Do in and through you to the glory of God.

You do have to forgive yourself for being unloved. And you must forgive yourself to be. Stop dwelling on all you are not and concentrate on all He created you to be. His love is not self-imposed limits. His love is to open up to Him. You have to open up to Him. You criticize yourself instead of receiving what you are not fully receiving.

Each morning recognize that "This is the day the LORD has made" (Psalm 118:24). And when the LORD's doing; it is marvelous. When bad things happen, say, "I am not my life, and because You love me."

Think of Jesus and how He lived and magnificent purpose He has become the chief corner stone.

I have been rejected and

love others, and it will change

ts About Your Life

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realize you and your life are a work in progress, and you anticipate great things ahead. You don't compare yourself to anyone else, and you don't compare your life to anyone else's.

No matter what your past has been—you may even feel unloved, unlovable, or unwanted as I did—God sees you as valuable, with great purpose and gifts He has put in you to use for His glory. But you have to be free of the past. It does not define you today. *God* defines you. His Spirit in you defines you. Jesus defined you as being worth dying for in order to give you eternal life with Him. So do not judge yourself by your past. Yesterday is gone. Today is a new day. Just because things happened a certain way in the past doesn't mean they will happen that way today. Do not limit what God wants to do in and through you today and in the future.

You do have to forgive anyone who rejected you or made you feel unloved. And you must forgive yourself for not being all *you* expect yourself to be. Stop dwelling on what you think you *should* be, and start dwelling on all you *can* be in the Lord. Stop focusing on what you are not and concentrate on who you *are*. God's love liberates you to be all He created you to be. His love has set you free of your own self-imposed limits. His love *releases* you. It doesn't control you. But you have to open up to His love fully and receive it every day. When you criticize yourself instead of believing what God says about you, you are not fully receiving His love.

Each morning recognize that God has given you this day. Say, "This is the day the LORD has made. [I] will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). And when good things happen, say, "This was the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in [my] eyes" (Psalm 118:23). When bad things happen, say, "Praise You, Lord, that You are in charge of my life, and because You love me, You will work things out for good."

Think of Jesus and how He was rejected, yet He fulfilled a great and magnificent purpose. "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22).

I have been rejected and am now fulfilling God's purpose for my

life. If I had ended my life, as I once attempted to do, I would never have known what God had planned for me. The same is true for you. Don't sabotage what He is doing in your life by not loving yourself. That doesn't mean you are "in love" with yourself, which is prideful and narcissistic. Jesus said to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). That means you must love who God made you to be in order to love your neighbor well. There is a connection between loving others and loving yourself. It's healthy to love who you are and to appreciate the life God has given you to live for Him. It frees you up to fully express your love for others God puts in your life and heart.

Prayer

LORD, thank You for me for Your purposes. You have put in me. Enable me to use me to be used for Your glory that I'm not seeing, and go on. Teach me to love You. You made me to be so I can have freedom. Keep me from being I am self-conscious.

I confess any feeling negative and critical. You are You to bring good into all things You have put in Your glory. Help me to love myself—that is, with in me and in them. I love and others that this is (13:10). I do not want to

Help me to "pursue" patience, and gentleness, eyes and pleasing to You beautiful and wonderful able. Let all that You are me to love myself in a way rather says, "You are greater more like You every day

In Jesus' name I pray

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Prayer of Love

LORD, thank You that You love me and that You made me for Your purposes. Help me to appreciate all You have put in me. Enable me to recognize the gifts You have given me to be used for Your glory. Enable me to see the good that I'm not seeing, and to reject the self-criticism I focus on. Teach me to love You more and appreciate who You made me to be so I can express love to others with greater freedom. Keep me from holding back from others because I am self-conscious.

I confess any feelings I have about my life that are negative and critical. You are in charge of my life, and I trust You to bring good into it. Give me wisdom to see the great things You have put in me and my life that will be used for Your glory. Help me to love others as You have taught me to love myself—that is, with great appreciation for Your work in me and in them. I know that when I love You, myself, and others that this is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10). I do not want to short-circuit that in any way.

Help me to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness" because they are beautiful in Your eyes and pleasing to You (1 Timothy 6:11). Lord, You are beautiful and wonderful and lovely and attractive and desirable. Let all that You are shine through all that I am. Help me to love myself in a way that doesn't say, "I am great," but rather says, "You are great! And You are in me making me more like You every day."

In Jesus' name I pray.

Words of Love

He who gets wisdom loves his own soul;
he who keeps understanding will find good.

PROVERBS 19:8

Put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

COLOSSIANS 3:14

Just as you presented your members as slaves
of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more
lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves
of righteousness for holiness.

ROMANS 6:19

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith,
love, peace with those who call on the Lord
out of a pure heart.

2 TIMOTHY 2:22

He who would love life and see good days,
let him refrain his tongue from evil,
and his lips from speaking deceit.

1 PETER 3:10

What If I'm Unhappy? Hope, and Love

I can't put up with this any longer. "I don't believe it's ever going to change." "I have loved you differently." "What I have hoped for is to endure another minute of this."

Have you ever found yourself with thoughts about anyone or anything more than I care to admit. But then I rely in my strength and not rely on God.

God is the only one who can bear up under the weight of our lives. He gives us the *faith* to believe in Him. He is the only one who can give us hope and expectations in life with *perseverance* so we can endure.

The Bible says the kind of love that "bears all things, believes all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7).

What If I'm Unable to Bear, Believe, Hope, and Endure All Things?

"I can't put up with this anymore." "I can't bear it any longer." "I don't believe it's ever going to happen." "I don't believe things will ever change." "I have lost hope that this person will ever be any different." "What I have hoped for is too long in coming." "I can't endure another minute of this." "I just can't keep going on this way."

Have you ever found yourself saying or thinking these kinds of thoughts about anyone or any situation? I know I have. More times than I care to admit. But that was back when I was trying to do life in my strength and not relying totally on God.

God is the only one who can give us the *strength* and *stamina* to bear up under the weight we are carrying. *He* is the only one who gives us the *faith* to believe for important things once we decide to trust in *Him*. *He* is the only one who gives us *hope* when we put our hope and expectations in *Him*. *He* is the only one who sustains us with *perseverance* so we can endure what we are facing.

The Bible says the kind of love we need to have is the kind that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7). But we can't do these things on our

own. In fact, we were not created to do them by ourselves. Our shoulders were not built to carry this load. God knows whether we have a heart that is surrendered enough to Him to rely on His enablement.

After Jesus was resurrected and ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to those who believed in Him. Jesus said, "When the *Helper* comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, *the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father*, He will testify of Me" (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit is our *helper* and *comforter*. He is our *counselor* and *teacher*. He helps us to do what we cannot do on our own. He is the one who enables us to *bear, believe, hope, and endure* all things.

Love Bears All Things

What does it mean to bear all things? It means to uphold the things *God* has called you to sustain. He has not called you to bear everyone's every burden—all your family members, friends, acquaintances, coworkers, and people you hear about. You can't do it. God doesn't want you trying to be God to other people. He—by the power of His Holy Spirit in you—will help you to bear all the things He has *called you* to do. He has not called you to be Santa Claus to everyone.

God calls us to bear one another's burdens, and one of the best ways to do this is in prayer. Heartfelt prayer that lifts the concerns of others for whom you sense a burden to pray is always God's will. We have all heard people say, *Well, all I can do is pray*. But the truth is, that is actually the *best* thing you can do. You should always start there and then do the other things He is leading you to do. When you lift up your concerns about others to God in prayer, ask Him what *He* wants you to do.

We don't need to get crazy about this. If we see a child about to run into the street where cars are driving by, we don't have to pray first to see if we should reach out and grab her. God has given us a brain, good sense, and the wisdom to make an immediate call on that.

Other words and phrases
fer, put up with, overlook, undergird, bolster up, show out, endeavor to do one's gird the foundation of, cr

Ask God to show you these things on your own you and how He can enable out stress.

Love

Believing all things m ple. Believing that God ha Believing that God will w also. Believing that God with those prayed for you for others or for yourself.

Other words and phrases
expect, conclude, be incli the best in, have confiden credence to, trust, assured disbelief, confidence in, a

Only God can help us to believing for the best in

Love

To hope all things m because of that we have h people for whom we pray write them off. For the v and ask Him to work in before Him. When we do is right for them.

Other words and phrases for "bear" as used in this context are suffer, put up with, overlook, lend support, maintain, sustain, uphold, undergird, bolster up, shore up, prop up, spare no effort, to go all out, endeavor to do one's best, sustain, maintain, back up, undergird the foundation of, cradle, and cushion.

Ask God to show you where you might be trying to do any of these things on your own. You may be surprised at what He shows you and how He can enable you to do what He calls you to do without stress.

Love Believes All Things

Believing all things means believing for the best in other people. Believing that God has a great plan for *their* life, as well as yours. Believing that God will work things out for their good, and yours also. Believing that God will answer your prayers for them, along with those prayed for yourself. It means you do not *expect* the worst for others or for yourself. Nor do you *suspect* the worst in them.

Other words and phrases for "believe" as it is used in this context are expect, conclude, be inclined to think the best of someone, believe the best in, have confidence in, give the benefit of the doubt, give credence to, trust, assured, reliance on, acceptance, suspension of disbelief, confidence in, and sureness.

Only God can help us do all these things, especially with regard to believing for the best in people as a sign of our love for them.

Love Hopes All Things

To hope all things means we put our hope in the *Lord*. And because of that we have hope that He is working in the lives of the people for whom we pray. It means we don't give up on people and write them off. For the worst offenders, we release them to God and ask Him to work in their heart and bring them to their knees before Him. When we do that, we are assured that He will do what is right for them.

Hope is one of the three things that last, along with faith and love, "but *the greatest of these is love*" (1 Corinthians 13:13). In the end, when we are with the Lord in heaven, we will no longer need faith because faith will become sight. We will no longer need hope because all our hope will be fulfilled. But we will always have love, because God *is* love and we will be with Him.

Other words and phrases for "hope" are cheerful expectation, state of expectancy, anticipation, likelihood, probability, presumption, certainty, put one's trust in, anticipate, envision, looking forward to, long awaited, expected, promised, and imminent.

All this means you cheerfully expect the best in people and can predict a good future for them. It means you have reason to believe that the best is yet to come because you have prayed for them. You anticipate good things from them, and you are on the lookout for good things *in* them and *for* them.

Ask God to give you the hope in Him you need for the seemingly hopeless situations and people you see around you. He will do that by putting the lasting hope in your heart that you need.

Love Endures All Things

Before I say anything else, let's get something straight. Enduring all things does not mean you allow someone to abuse you. A woman does not allow herself to be hurt, mistreated, beaten, or damaged by her husband or potential future husband. And you do not allow anyone to violate you in any way. Ever. That is not of the Lord. It is never His will for you. And anyone who tells you otherwise is aligned with evil, and you need to remove yourself from that person immediately.

Enduring all things means you are willing to go the extra mile with someone. You are persisting in the situation, and you are summoning your most patient self to go the distance to see them through their difficult situation.

Other words and phrases

persist, carry on, keep on, continue, abide, hold on, stand long, love through, and so on.

You cannot be everything. God enables you to be faithful. He brings into your life.

James said, "We count it all joy when we endure trials, because we don't give up and endure because of the chance that we will do what God is calling us to do."

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Other words and phrases for "endure" as it is used here are persevere, persist, carry on, keep on, keep trying, keep up the good work, continue, abide, hold on, stay the course, go the distance, prevail, last long, love through, and stand the test of time.

You cannot be everything to all people. You can only be what God enables you to be for the people He puts on your heart and brings into your life.

James said, "We count them blessed who endure" (James 5:11). He is talking about enduring until the coming of the Lord. It means we don't give up and end it all. Or withdraw from loving others because of the chance they will only disappoint us. We continue to do what God is calling us to do and love others as He is leading us.

Prayer of Love

LORD, help me to *bear* all things when it comes to loving others. I know You will not call me to go beyond what I am able to bear because it is You who sustains me. Uphold me so I have strength to help others and stand with them as they go through trials. Help me to *believe* all things by suspending any disbelief I have in me regarding others. If I cannot believe for the best in them, I can believe for *Your* best *for* them. Help me to encourage them as You have encouraged me.

Lord, help me to *hope* all things for others because my hope for them is in You. Just as I never suspend my hope in You, help me to not lose hope for other people either. Teach me to not write people off who have disappointed me, or who seem to never respond to the hope You have for them. I have courage knowing You will strengthen my heart because my hope is in You (Psalm 31:24).

Lord, enable me to *endure* the things You have called me to do as a sign of love for others. Help me to persevere in prayer for them and encourage them to stay true to the promises You have given them in Your Word. Enable me to keep going and trying again after someone has rejected Your love and mine. Strengthen me to go the distance with those whom You have instructed me to do so. I don't want to be a person who only endures for a while (Matthew 13:21). I want to stay the course with You so I can stay the course with others to whom You lead me to reveal Your love. Transform all my relationships as a result of Your giving me the ability to do all this.

In Jesus' name I pray.

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Words of Love

Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners
against Himself, lest you become weary and
discouraged in your souls.

HEBREWS 12:3

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready
to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the
hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

1 PETER 3:15

We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation
produces perseverance; and perseverance, character;
and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts
by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

ROMANS 5:3-5

After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

HEBREWS 6:15

Whatever things you ask in prayer,
believing, you will receive.

MATTHEW 21:22

How Can I Show Love in Every Situation?

Love never fails.

That's what it says in the love chapter.

But we have seen human love toward us fail. Fail to materialize. Fail to go the distance. Fail to believe for the best in us. Fail to be kind. We've seen our own love toward others fail at times too.

Only *God's* love never fails.

In order for *our* love to never fail, it needs to be established on God's love first. His love in us never fails because His Spirit of love is in us. And *He* never fails because He can't fail to be who He is. So it's *our* job to see to it that we draw close to Him every day in prayer and worship and in reading His love letter to us.

We also have to ask God to guide us in all things—especially pertaining to showing love to others. It's not that we need to ask God *if* we are to show His love. We must inquire of Him *what* the loving thing to do is in each situation and each person or group of people.

First of all, you can show love in every situation simply by asking God to help you *not* show a *lack* of love in any possible way. (Remember chapter 17 about revealing a lack of love?) In some

places that alone would be a great testimony to the greatness of God, not to mention a shock to those who are not used to that.

Let the Holy Spirit Lead You to Do God's Will

Jesus said doing God's will was like food to Him (see John 4:34). It must become like that for us as well. When we demonstrate our love for God by doing His will, it feeds *our* body, mind, soul, and spirit too. It edifies us in ways that nothing else can.

Not long ago I made a decision to help a friend. I knew she needed my assistance, and the Holy Spirit would not let me ignore that fact. I was exhausted from many demands and deadlines and important obligations to others I needed to be doing. So I had good reasons *not* to help. But she was alone, with no one else to assist her in her move to a new place, and I was physically and mentally able to do it. All the people who said they would help her did not show up. Who wants to help someone move, right?

I knew this would take hours and it would be exhausting—and I am not a young person. But neither is she. And it was a longer drive for me than I wanted to make alone at night at that time in my life. My list of reasons for not doing it was long.

Before that encounter I had with God in the love chapter of the Bible and He convicted me about asking Him how He wanted me to show His love to others, I would not have even asked Him about this. My mind would have already been made up. But on this day I asked the Lord what I should do—because the commitments I had made to other people had to be considered as well—and the Holy Spirit impressed *clearly* upon my heart that the loving thing would be to help her. I asked God to give me the energy, stamina, and physical ability to do what I needed to do. When I headed out in my car, I felt God with me all the way. When I got to her house, my friend was overwhelmed by all that needed to be done, but because I was being assisted by the Holy Spirit, I had great clarity on how this project could be done quickly and efficiently. And God gave me

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Four hours later we finished what needed to be done. The most
amazing thing was that on my drive home I had more strength and
energy than when I started. That was a miracle from God! I had cho-
sen to show love according to His leading, and I felt His presence in
greater measure than I had ever felt it before.

Olympic runner Eric Liddell would not run in the Olympics
on a Sunday because he was a strong Christian, and he obeyed God
by calling the Lord's day holy—the Sabbath, a day of rest dedicated
to God. In *Chariots of Fire*, a film about his life, he said of God,
“When I run I feel His pleasure.” He felt God's pleasure whenever
he ran because he was doing God's will, and his love for God was
his priority.

I felt that same thing when I chose to show God's love over my
own convenience and help a lady move. I chose to ignore the cries of
my flesh saying, “I can't do this! I am too old, too tired, too pressed
for time.” But I came out the better for it. I found strength from the
Lord—strength I absolutely did not have without His enablement.
And I gained a friend for life.

*God enables us to do things we could never do without Him when
we choose to do them in love—the love He puts in our heart for others.*

Don't Assume You Know God's Will in Every Situation

Showing love to others doesn't mean we get to play God and
try to meet every person's needs. That's dangerous and definitely
not God's will. My husband and I learned our lesson well about
that when we were trying to help someone without the leading of
the Holy Spirit. We thought, *It's always good to help someone in need,
right?* Wrong! We cannot always make a judgment as to what a per-
son's actual need is without knowing the facts. And only God knows
the whole story.

One time we helped out someone by giving him money to pay

his mortgage that month because it was way overdue and he did not have the funds. It turned out that we should have given the money to his wife because he used it to buy drugs. We didn't even know he was using drugs. But *she* did, and she would have told us if we had asked. But we didn't ask. And we didn't seek God about it. We didn't pray first. We didn't ask the man any questions. We *assumed* God would want us to do this. But we were *dead wrong*.

When his wife later told us what happened, we were shocked and grieved. That man later learned a hard lesson—a fall that needed to happen in order to bring him to his senses and get help—a fall we delayed for at least a month because we *enabled* him to keep his destructive lifestyle going.

We were *playing God* instead of *seeking God*.

Sometimes the most loving thing is the hardest to do. That's because what may seem to you is the best thing may actually *not* be the best for that person at that time. The money we gave would have been better used to get that man some help. We absolutely must be led by the Holy Spirit in every situation.

God decides *who*. He decides *when*. He decides *how*. We don't. That's why we need to ask Him for His leading. We are not supposed to try and be someone's savior and rush in to meet their every need so that they never have to seek God for anything. When we do that, we rob them of knowing God as their Provider, Protector, and Deliverer.

We must always remain God's instrument and remember that we work for His family business. We don't run things. We don't go off on our own trying to rescue and fix everyone. We cannot do that anyway. We don't have supernatural power and unlimited resources without the Lord. And He only lets us partake of those according to *His will* and not our own.

In a nutshell, God loves us. But we *choose to open up to His love* in order to fully *receive* it. Those who do not acknowledge God as

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. His love for us—cannot be earned. But once we do receive His love, we *not keep ourselves from* His love for Him, He fills us with His love. *we become partakers of* His love into others, *and* when we love others because of His love, that shines ever brightly.

Our love for others is not for ourselves; it is to attract others to Him. It should lead. You and I should spend eternity. You and I should spend eternity forever with Him.

God warns us in His Word. And we see that all signs point in that direction now. The day is here. We have the opportunity to make a choice. We will either choose God or we will choose to live by not making any choices.

Going to heaven to live is not only secured by people who have been saved, but also by those who have paid the price for our name written in the book of life. It is enough to pray they will know how to do that.

Paul said, "Do you not know that those who are called to run the race must run it to win it. And everyone who competes must be sober. Now they do it to obtain the perishable crown" (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

Run it to win it.

Showing love to another

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the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—all personifications of His love for us—cannot receive His love in the depth He has for us. But once we do receive God's love and walk with Him, *we cannot keep ourselves from showing our love for Him*. As we express our love for Him, He fills us with more of His divine nature. *The more we become partakers of His divine nature*, the more we sow seeds of His love into others, *according to His leading*. The rewards are great when we love others because then our path will be “like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18).

Our love for others is not manifested in order to attract people to ourselves; it is to attract them to God. And that is where this ultimately should lead. You love people enough to care about where they spend eternity. You love them enough to not want them to spend eternity forever separated from God.

God warns us in His Word that the day of reckoning will come. And we see that all signs indicate the world is quickly headed in that direction now. The day and time have been extended to give people the opportunity to make the right choice as to what side they are on. We will either choose God or His enemy during our lifetime. And by not making any choice at all, we have chosen the enemy's side.

Going to heaven to dwell in eternity with the one true God is only secured by people who make the choice to receive the only One who has paid the price for us to secure our place in heaven and have our name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We must love others enough to pray they will make the right decision. And then show them how to do that.

Paul said, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

Run it to win it.

Showing love to another person means we are not to withhold good

from those to whom it is due when it is in our power to give it (Proverbs 3:27). "Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,' when you have it with you" (Proverbs 3:28). It means we are to show love in every situation because we *have it*. When the Lord opens up an opportunity to tell someone the reason for the hope within you, do it in love. Take the time to look that person in the eye and smile. Let them know you see them—and that they are not invisible to you, they are valuable. And you will reap blessings on earth and rewards in heaven that will last for eternity.

Showing love to others will not only transform *your* life, but it will transform your relationships with *others* as well.

P
LORD, fill my heart
to others. Enable me
I depend on You for
Holy Spirit to make
pleasing to You. I do
doing in another's life
instead be led by You

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Prayer of Love

LORD, fill my heart so full of Your love that it overflows to others. Enable me to show Your love in every situation. I depend on You for guidance with that. Lead me by Your Holy Spirit to make decisions regarding what is always pleasing to You. I don't want to interfere with what You are doing in another's life. I don't want to move in the flesh, but instead be led by Your Spirit in all I do and say.

Teach me to not only love others with my words but also with my actions. When someone I know has experienced loss, help me to not only pray for them but also do something to help them recover. I know there is a time for grief and we should not interfere with that, but when grief becomes prolonged to the point of physical and emotional paralysis, I pray You would enable me to help that person walk through it and get to the other side.

Teach me to love others with the love in my heart that comes from You. I know that "the mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom" and "the lips of the righteous know what is acceptable" (Proverbs 10:31-32). Help me to know words that are wise and acceptable at all times. I know that "in the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise," so make my words to be valuable and edifying to others and never meaningless (Proverbs 10:19-20). I know that can only happen by Your Spirit of love working in and through me.

As I learn to love others in ways that please You, enable me to be consistent so all my relationships will be transformed and will glorify You.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Words of Love

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-17

The ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD,
and He ponders all his paths.

PROVERBS 5:21

God has not given us a spirit of fear,
but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:24

Now abide faith, hope, love, these three;
but the greatest of these is love.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

speaking to

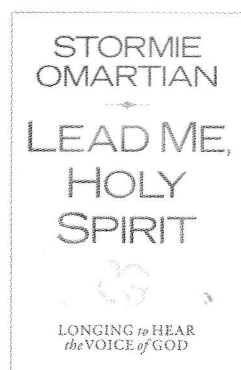
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you should go.

*"When you clearly recognize His voice
speaking to your heart, your life will never be the same."*



God's Holy Spirit is as close as your next breath—what an amazing gift. How comforting to be able to walk in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in every area of your life.

Beloved author Stormie Omartian has written books on prayer that have been read by millions. Now she focuses on the Holy Spirit and how He wants you to hear His gentle leading when He speaks to your heart, soul, and spirit. How He wants to help you enter into the relationship with God you yearn for, the wholeness and freedom God has for you, and the fulfillment of God's promises to you. How He *wants* to lead you to

- be transformed in your emotions and character
- discern God's guidance, blessings, and protection
- receive the inheritance laid up for you as God's child
- live out God's will for your life
- have a life that you cannot possibly live without Him

As you trust in the Holy Spirit and His great love for you, you will be filled with His mind, knowledge, and wisdom. You will grasp a vision for the special calling on your life, and you will sense His guidance in the way you should go.