

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 21 • Issue 8



**FLAVORS
OF LOVE**

It's worth a taste

Dinner Date

The other woman

**He Expected It
of Me**

A tale of two brothers



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

LOVE CONQUERS ALL

In John 13:35, Jesus says, “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”¹ That doesn't necessarily seem too hard, but for a word that we use so often, when you think about it, *love* is actually quite difficult to pin down. You understand it through actions. What would you be willing to do to show love to those around you?

Sir Ernest Shackleton, the famous Antarctic explorer, once described how, one night, in an emergency hut, he and his men were trying to sleep, having just rationed out the last biscuits. The situation was dire, and no one there could be sure he'd make it back to civilization.

Shackleton sensed a movement and saw one of the men turning to see how the others were faring. He obviously thought that everyone else was asleep, so he stretched over his neighbor and took his biscuit bag. Shackleton was dumbfounded. He thought he could have trusted this man with his life. Now he was stealing a man's last biscuit. Had the pressure turned him into a thief?

Then he saw him move again. He removed the biscuit from his own bag, put both biscuits into the other man's bag, and quietly returned the bag to his sleeping friend's side. Shackleton said, “I dare not tell you that man's name. I felt that act was a secret between himself and God.”

Love has to do with God. It has to do with giving of self for the good of others. It has to do with relationships: mothers, fathers, siblings, friends, and colleagues. It has to do with romance. The articles in this issue of *Activated* cover all those types. As we strive to become better disciples of the Master, we can bring a bit more of His light into this lonely world.

May God bless you and yours with an extra measure of His love.

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1. NLT



BY CHRIS MIZRANY

THE OTHER DAY I READ A VERY INTERESTING ARTICLE ABOUT THE FEYNMAN TECHNIQUE, which promises to help you learn anything in four steps. It intrigued me, as I enjoy learning and jump at any opportunity to make the process easier. The article says that Feynman tried to always explain complex ideas in the simplest terms.¹

Then I remembered something equally practical and far more important, which I'll call the Two Steps of Love, as laid out by the greatest teacher:

1. Love God with all that is within you—absolutely and unequivocally *everything*. That includes your time, desires, money, and everything else.
2. Love those around you, and care about their needs and feelings just as much as you care about your own. Put yourself in others' shoes, and take the time to help them wherever and whenever you can.²

And right there, we have a simple formula for meaningful, successful living.

1. Here are Feynman's Four Steps of Learning:
<https://curiosity.com/topics/learn-anything-in-four-steps-with-the-feynman-technique-curiosity>.
2. See Matthew 22:37–40.

How many times has it been said that what the world needs is more love? And yet, sadly, we see so many events in our modern world that represent the opposite: war, violence, discrimination, and intolerance. How truly different our lives and society in general would be if the Two Steps of Love were practiced daily.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "We have communion with Christ in His thoughts, views, and purposes; for His thoughts are our thoughts according to our capacity and sanctity. Believers take the same view of matters as Jesus does; that which pleases Him pleases them, and that which grieves Him grieves them also."

How wonderful it would be if that were truer of me; to think as Christ thinks and have desires that match His, instead of my selfish tendencies. It grieves our Savior to see so many people who are unhappy and unloved, therefore it should grieve me as well. I cannot always do as much as I'd like, but I *can* love much.

If I'm faithful to take time reading His Word, listening to His voice, and following His Two Steps of Love, I'm on the road to living a life blessed with spiritual fulfillment.

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BY MARIA FONTAINE

NO FAVORITES

IF I WERE TO ASK YOU TO DESCRIBE JESUS' MINISTRY TO PEOPLE, what would you say? It's an important question, because He's called us to be His representatives in this world, and we need to consider how we can best reflect His love as we follow in His footsteps.

What Jesus offers meets the deepest needs of each person who comes to Him. It goes beyond anything this world has to offer and has the power to transform anyone. He came to give the same transforming love to the shepherds in the fields as He did to the radical zealots or the religious leaders or the Roman centurion or the little children who gathered around Him. He gives freely to every person who is seeking to know the truth.

Jesus loves unconditionally! He sees past the faults, the outward appearances, and even the outward show in words and actions, to the heart that is desperate to find hope and truth. He promised that He would never cast out anyone who came to Him.¹ The needs



of each person stir His heart and should stir ours as well, regardless of whether they are a beggar on the street, a wealthy city father, an average person trying to get through

each day, or a coworker we would not normally interact with all that much.

Jesus loves every person on earth as much as He loves you and me. Jesus' love was never restricted to any one group of people. He loved the Pharisees who came to Him to seek the truth as much as He loved the publicans. He loved the Roman centurion as much as He loved the leper whom He touched and made whole. Jesus loved the woman taken in adultery as much as He loved His disciples. He loved the rich young ruler as much as He loved the widow with her mite. No matter who they were or what they'd done, Jesus loved them enough to die for them.

If we want to follow in His footsteps, we need to do the same. That means opening our hearts, as Jesus did, to share His love with those who need it.

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1. See John 6:37.



WHY IS LOVING OTHERS OFTEN SO DIFFICULT?

LOVING OTHERS CAN BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AT TIMES. A common phrase to refer to those people that we consistently find ourselves challenged to love is “extra grace required” people. But even people we generally like can sometimes be difficult to love. The main reason we run into difficulties in loving others is sin, both ours and that of those we try to love. ... Battling both our own selfishness and sin tendencies and dealing with the selfishness and sin tendencies of others can make love a chore.

Another reason it can be difficult for us to love others is that we sometimes misunderstand what true love is. We tend to think of love as

primarily an emotional response. The problem is that we cannot always control our emotions. We can certainly control what we do because of the emotions, but too often the emotions themselves just happen. But the kind of love God calls us to have for others is the same kind that He has for us. It is *agape* love, the essence of which is sacrifice. God’s love for us is a sacrificial love, the kind that sent Him to the cross for our sins. He didn’t save us because we were lovable; He saved us because His love caused Him to sacrifice Himself for us. Do we love others enough to sacrifice for them, even when they are not lovable? Loving others is a matter of the will and the volition, not the emotions.

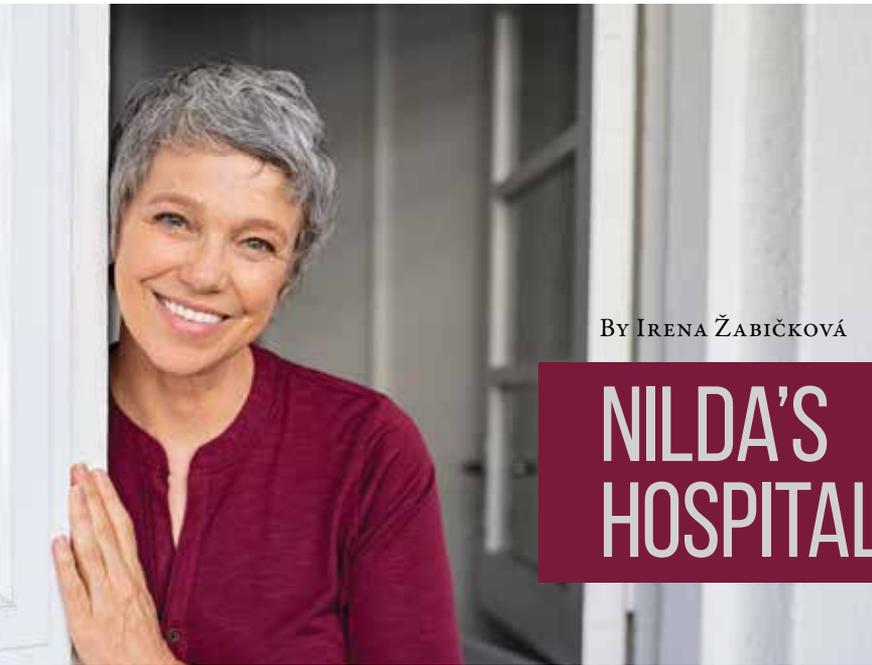
God died for us at our worst, in the midst of our sin, when we were totally unlovable.¹ When we make sacrifices in order to love someone,

we get a glimpse of the depth of God’s love for us, and we also reflect Him to the world. Jesus told His disciples, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”² Notice He didn’t say, “Feel loving toward one another.” He said, “Love one another.” He commanded an action, not a feeling. ...

Loving others is difficult because they are human and we are human. But in this difficulty we come to better appreciate the quality of God’s love for us. And when we love others in spite of their lack of lovability, God’s Spirit shines through, He is glorified, others are edified, and the world sees Christ in us.

THIS ARTICLE IS INCLUDED COURTESY OF GOTQUESTIONS.ORG.³ ■

1. See Romans 5:8; John 15:13.
2. John 13:34–35 NIV
3. <https://www.gotquestions.org/loving-others.html>



BY IRENA ŽABIČKOVÁ

NILDA'S HOSPITALITY

ABOUT SIX YEARS AGO WE MOVED TO A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD. Since arriving, we've tried to be friendly with our neighbors and show kindness. We greet them with a smile, ask how they are, and several times we prepared pizza and delivered it to them as a sign of friendship. We thought we were doing well in showing our neighbors we care. But then we met Nilda.

Nilda's two adult grandchildren are both disabled with a genetic degenerative disease. In order to help with their care, she decided to move in with her daughter's family. Caring for physically disabled people creates a lot of work and stress, and no one would blame this family for focusing on their own problems and challenges. But not so with Nilda. She is the

most hospitable person I have ever known, and there always seem to be at least one, if not two, sets of visitors at their home. As previous visitors get up and start leaving, new visitors enter the house—there is a constant flow of people.

Drinks and cakes are always handy, or snacks and simple dishes are prepared in minutes. In spite of the challenges and difficulties this family is facing, there's a joyful and optimistic atmosphere.

Even our dog, who occasionally visits her with us, doesn't leave without a bowl of water and a special dog treat or two. In fact, our dog recognizes Nilda at a distance and can't wait to see what yumminess she has on hand this time. Nilda pays attention to the smallest details about her visitors.

I don't know if a few paragraphs can do justice to the joy, kindness,

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

—*Hebrews 13:2 NIV*

Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

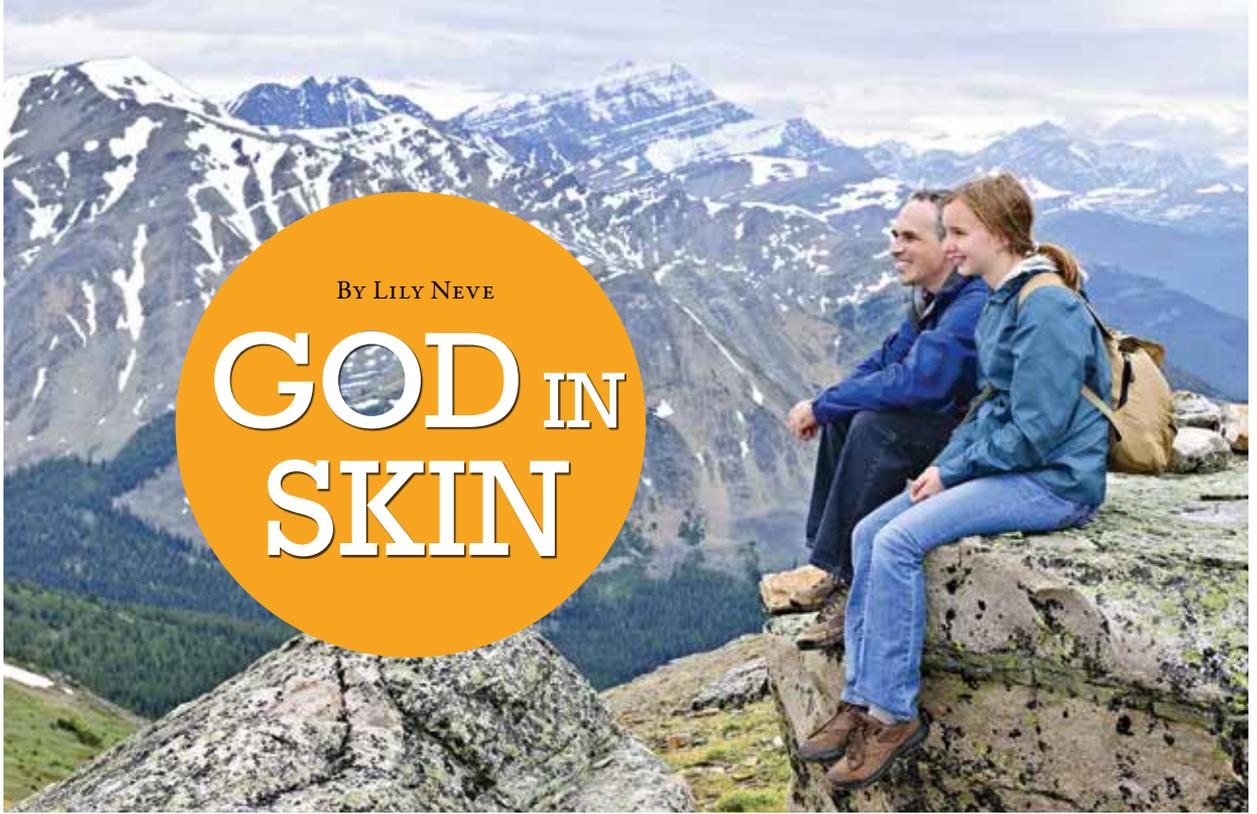
—*Romans 12:13 NIV*

loving concern, help, and hospitality that she bestows on others, but I was reminded of Nilda when I read the following quote:

Our Lord ... tells us that the little things we do—feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, showing hospitality to the stranger, visiting the sick, and the other nameless ministries of love of which we take no account—if done in the right spirit, are accepted as though they had been actually done to Christ himself! ... The best thing we can do with our love is not to watch for a chance to perform some one fine act that will shine before the world—but to fill all the days and hours with little kindnesses which will make countless hearts nobler, stronger, and happier.—*J. R. Miller*

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1. <http://www.perunmondomigliore.org>



BY LILY NEVE

GOD IN SKIN

I READ ONCE THAT A GOOD FATHER PREPARES US FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, GOD.

My father may not realize it, but one thing that shaped my life was a conversation he and I had sitting on a hill overlooking our home the summer I was 18. He probably doesn't even remember it—so simple and yet so typical of him and his wise and loving way of guiding me without overtly giving advice.

We talked about everything that day, and I found myself telling him about a boyfriend, the problems we'd encountered, and what our friendship might lead to. I don't remember how I explained it all, but I do remember how awkward I felt. After I'd gotten it all out, I looked at him and asked plaintively, "What do I do now, Daddy? Tell me what to do."

"That *is* a tough decision," he began, "but you're 18. You're an adult now. I'm not going to tell you what to do, because you already know what you should do."

I looked at him blankly. No, I *wasn't* an adult yet—or at least I didn't feel like one. I was only 18, and I didn't have a clue. Wait a minute—yes, I did. In that situation I knew exactly what I should do. Not that I wanted to do it, but I knew. And I ended up doing the right thing largely because Dad believed that I would, that I had the capacity to do it.

Not every decision that I've made from that point on has been the right one, but that conversation helped me onto the path to independence and got me believing that I could succeed at life. Knowing that someone believed in me helped me later when even harder decisions came my way.

Dad has always made it clear that he not only believes in me, but he loves me unconditionally. No matter what choices I make, I will always be his daughter and will always have his love. Of all the gifts I have ever received from him, I am most grateful for that assurance.

It took me a while, but eventually I realized that my father's love and trust mirrors God's.

God teaches us to walk and then lets us run on our own, believing we can succeed but always being there for us when we fall or need help. "You are a special person," He tells us, "who can do something wonderful for Me and others." And when we mess up, as we often do, He whispers, "Whatever you do, I will always love you," and He helps us do better.

Thanks, Dad, for the gift of God's love in flesh and bones! ■



Dinner Date

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



AFTER 21 YEARS OF MARRIAGE, I discovered a new way of keeping the spark of love alive.

A little while ago I went out with another woman.

It was really my wife's idea.

"I know that you love her," she said one day, taking me by surprise.

"But I love you," I protested.

"I know, but you also love her."

The other woman that my wife wanted me to see was my mother, who has been a widow for 19 years. I loved her, of course, but the demands of my work and my three children had made it possible to visit her only occasionally. That night I called to invite her to go out for dinner and a movie.

"What's wrong? Are you unwell?" she asked. My mother is the type of woman who suspects that a late-night call or a surprise invitation is a sign of bad news.

"I thought that it would be nice to spend some time with you," I responded. "Just the two of us."

She thought about it for a moment, then said, "I would like that very much."

That Friday after work, as I drove over to pick her up, I was a bit nervous. When I arrived at her house, I noticed that she, too, seemed to be nervous about our "date." She waited in the door with her coat on. She had curled her hair and was wearing the dress that she had worn to celebrate her last wedding anniversary. She smiled, her face as radiant as an angel's.

"I told my friends that I was going to go out with my son, and they were impressed," she said as she got into the car. "They can't wait to hear about our adventure."



A GOOD START

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

CLARK AND MARY WERE IN LOVE. Clark proposed marriage, and Mary accepted. But it wasn't as simple as that. Clark knew that to have a happy and harmonious marriage, he needed to win the approval of Mary's parents, Clarence and Goldie—especially Goldie. He'd heard how mothers-in-law could be, you know, a little difficult. He braced himself and hoped for the best.

"You realize that a marriage is supposed to be 50-50, don't you?" Goldie tested Clark.

"Not ours," Clark answered without a moment's hesitation. "Ours is going to be 60-60!"

And so it was.

That's the true story of how one happy home began—a home I was fortunate to become a part of a few years later. It's a simple story, but it contains an important truth: Successful marriages and happy homes (or any successful relationships, for that matter) are built on little daily deeds of loving self-sacrifice, where each person is willing to give that extra 10% without keeping track of whose turn it is. Don't you love it when people are that way with you?

But where do you get that kind of love that will help you and your loved ones through whatever ups and downs, challenges, and disappointments the years may bring your way? It comes from the source of all good things, God Himself. And it's yours for the asking. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father, who gives us richly all things to enjoy."¹

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED*'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR 14 YEARS FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE USA. ■

1. James 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:17

We went to a restaurant that, although not elegant, was very nice and cozy. My mother took my arm as if she were the First Lady. After we sat down, I had to read the menu. Her eyes can only read large print.

Halfway through the entrées, I lifted my eyes and saw Mom sitting there staring at me. A nostalgic smile was on her lips.

"It was I who used to have to read the menu when you were small," she said.

"Then it's time that you relaxed and let me return the favor," I responded. During the dinner we had a lovely conversation, catching up on recent events of each other's life.

We talked so much that we missed the movie. As we arrived at her house later, she said, "I'll go out with you again, but only if you let me invite you." I agreed.

"How was your dinner date?" asked my wife when I got home.

"Very nice. Much more so than I could have imagined," I answered. A week later my mother died a few hours after a massive heart attack. It happened so suddenly that I didn't have a chance to do anything for her.

But some time later I received an envelope with a copy of a restaurant receipt from the same place Mother and I had dined. An attached note said: "I paid this bill in advance. I'm almost sure that I won't be there, but, nevertheless, I paid for two plates—one for you and the other for your wife. You will never know what that night meant for me. I love you."

At that moment I understood the importance of saying "I love you" before it's too late and of giving our loved ones the time that they deserve. ■

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

REKINDLING THE MAGIC

Q: MY WIFE AND I HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR 11 YEARS, and though we still love each other, our relationship has grown stale. What can we do to put the magic back in our marriage?

A: When most couples vow “for better or worse” in the starry-eyed magic of the moment, they can only imagine their lives together getting better and better. New parents take one long, deep look into the eyes of their baby and vow to never hurt or disappoint the child. Children promise to stay best friends forever. Doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, volunteers, and others dedicate their lives to serving others. It’s love—that superglue of families, friendships, and every other good thing—that inspires such commitment.

Why, then, do married couples squabble? Why do parents nag, belittle, and get impatient? Why do friends drift apart? Why does the inspiration to selflessly serve others wane? How do we rekindle the love



that inspired us to take our vows?

As time passes, we become so familiar with the people we are closest to that we stop valuing and treating them like we should. The wear and tear of daily living takes its toll, and the bright newness of once-treasured relationships begins to fade. Up close and personal, everyone’s flaws and foibles begin to show. Routines become ruts. Our once-prized blessings begin to weigh on us.

When that happens, it’s time to reverse the trend. That will take a

conscious effort and will not be easy, especially if the problem has been going on for some time, but it can be done. First, take some time to remind yourself of all the things about the other person that drew you to them in the first place. Focus on those good and positive traits. Then put yourself in *their* position and ask yourself, *Why do you think your spouse was initially attracted to you?* The quickest and surest way to return the shine to any tarnished relationship is to remember what brought you into a love relationship in the first place. Get busy being the person you set out to be at the start, appreciate the good qualities in your partner, and the other party will almost certainly follow suit.

And remember, God specializes in fresh starts. “If anyone is in Christ,” the Bible tells us, “he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”¹ That’s a promise about salvation, but it’s also a promise for everyday living. God will revitalize and renew any relationship if we ask Him to first work within our own hearts and lives. ■

1. 2 Corinthians 5:17



THERE IS A STORY ABOUT TWO BROTHERS WHO ENLISTED IN THE ARMY DURING WORLD WAR I AND WERE ASSIGNED TO THE SAME UNIT. They were soon sent to the frontline trenches. In WWI trench warfare, each side dug a network of trenches along the front-line of their territory, then laid siege to the other side's trenches. From time to time, one side or the other launched an offensive to try to break through the enemy's lines. During one such attack, the younger brother was mortally wounded and lay in no-man's-land—that exposed, deadly area between the opposing forces.

The older brother, still safe in the trench, saw it happen and knew instinctively what he must do. He worked his way through the trench, around other soldiers, until he came to his field commander. "I've got to go get him!" the older brother called out over the din of battle.

"That's impossible!" his commander yelled as he grabbed him. "You'll be killed the minute you stick your head out of this trench!"

But the older brother tore himself loose from the officer's grip, scrambled out of the trench, and plunged into no-man's-land to find his brother, amid withering fire from the enemy.

When he did, the younger brother could only manage a whisper. "I knew you'd come!" By this time, the older brother had also been seriously wounded. He barely managed to drag his brother back to their line, and they both fell into the trench, dying.

"Why did you do it?" demanded the commander. "I told you you'd get yourself killed too!"

"I had to," the older brother replied with a final smile. "He expected it of me. I couldn't let him down." ■

There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.
—*Jesus, John 15:13 NLT*

When someone asked Jesus what was God's greatest commandment, He replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."¹

As far as God is concerned, love is the supreme virtue. Love is the most important thing. God doesn't ask us to be perfect; He doesn't ask us to be free from mistakes; He doesn't ask us to do great things that the world will hear of. He just asks us to love others.

—*Shannon Shayler*

1. Matthew 22:37–39

1 CORINTHIANS 13 FOR TODAY

JESUS GAVE US THE KEY TO TRUE PURPOSE AND HARMONY WHEN HE SAID, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹ What does that mean, in practical, everyday terms? One of the best explanations ever given is found in the Bible’s “love chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. Times and terms may have changed, but the underlying principles are as true as ever. Here’s a paraphrased version of 1 Corinthians 13 for today.

1. Though I can speak five languages and talk intelligently on dozens of subjects, if I don’t have enough love to keep from gossiping or putting down others, I’m not just making so much useless noise, I’m being downright destructive.

2. And though I read the Bible regularly and even know parts of it by heart, and though I pray daily and have a lot of faith and other spiritual gifts, if I don’t have enough love to sometimes sacrifice some of my personal desires for others, then all of my spirituality amounts to nothing.

3. And though I work two jobs to provide for my family, and though I give to charity and volunteer for every community project that comes up, if I don’t show love and kindness to those I live and work with, all my hard work and self-sacrifice are worthless.

4. Love has a long, hard, frustrating day at the office, yet doesn’t get snappy and short-tempered. Love is happy for the other guy when he seems to get all the breaks. Love doesn’t have to drive the flashiest car, live in the biggest house, or have all the latest gadgets. Love doesn’t always have to be the boss or have the last word.

5. Love isn’t rude or crude, isn’t selfish, and doesn’t gripe or pressure others to get what it wants. Love is too busy being concerned about the needs of others to spend much time worrying about its own. Love doesn’t freak out when things don’t go its way. Love is quick to believe the best about people and slow to believe the rest.

6. Love hates to hear gossip and instead wants to talk about others’ good qualities and the good that they’ve done. It is tireless in the pursuit of truth and rejects falsehoods—even the ones that might be comfortable.

1. Matthew 22:39

LOVE POWER

There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer, no disease that enough love will not heal. No door that enough love will not open, no gulf that enough love will not bridge. No wall that enough love will not throw down, no sin that enough love will not redeem. It makes no difference how deeply seated may be the trouble, how hopeless the outlook, how muddled the tangle, how great the mistake. Sufficient love will dissolve it all. —Emmet Fox (1886–1951)

MEET THE MAN

If you haven't yet met the Man of Love who has power to forgive the past, transform the present, brighten the future, and grant heavenly happiness forever, you can by sincerely praying the following prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so I can know true love and have eternal life. Please forgive me for every wrong and unloving thing I have ever done. Please come into my heart, give me Your gift of eternal life, and help me to know Your love and peace. Thank You for hearing and answering this prayer and for Your promise to be with me always, from this moment on. Amen.

7. Love is always ready to give others the benefit of the doubt and looks for the best in them. Love wants to see others reach their full potential and does all it can to make that happen. Love never runs out of patience, even with those who are slow to “get with the program” or do their share. Love doesn't keep looking at the clock when others are talking.

8. Love never fails. I fail others, and others can fail me. We all can be mistaken, misguided, or confused at times. Our words and deeds often fall short, and our bright ideas don't always play out the way we want or expect them to.

9. We're frail, fallible, and often foolish, and our understanding of the world we live in, not to mention the world to come, is only partial at best.

10. But when we see God, it will all make sense.

11. We're immature children when it comes to practicing real love, but God can help us outgrow our childish ways.

12. At the moment, we're pretty clueless when it comes to love and the other things that matter most in life, but when we'll live in His kingdom we will know and understand God and His plan so much better.

13. Faith in God and hope based on the promises in His Word are important virtues to cultivate—but having love is even more important! ■



FLAVORS OF LOVE

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

The course of true love never did run smooth.

—*William Shakespeare (1564–1616)*

Love is everything it's cracked up to be. It really is worth fighting for, being brave for, risking everything for.

—*Erica Jong (b. 1942)*

Love is an act of endless forgiveness, a tender look which becomes a habit.

—*Peter Ustinov (1921–2004)*

You come to love not by finding the perfect person, but by seeing an imperfect person perfectly.

—*Sam Keen (b. 1931)*

Love at first sight is easy to understand; it's when two people have been looking at each other for a lifetime that it becomes a miracle.

—*Amy Bloom (b. 1953)*

It's not love that blinds, but self-love.

—*Voltaire (1694–1778)*

All the best things in life come packaged [with] a ribbon of risk. You untie the gift, you assume the risk, and equally, the joy. Parenthood is like that. Marriage is like that. Friendship is like that. In order to experience life in the full sense, you expose yourself to [continual] vulnerability.

—*Kristin Armstrong (b. 1973)*

Love is like a precious plant. You can't just accept it and leave it in the cupboard or just think it's going to get on by itself. You've got to keep watering it. You've got to really look after it and nurture it.

—*John Lennon (1940–1980)*

We mistakenly assume that if our partners love us they will react and behave in certain ways—the [same] ways we react and behave when we love someone.

—*John Gray (b. 1951)*

Relationships of all kinds are like sand held in your hand. Held loosely,

with an open hand, the sand remains where it is. The minute you close your hand and squeeze tightly to hold on, the sand trickles through your fingers. You may hold onto some of it, but most will be spilled. A relationship is like that. Held loosely, with respect and freedom for the other person, it is likely to remain intact. But hold too tightly, too possessively, and the relationship slips away and is lost.

—*Kaleel Jamison (1931–1985)*

You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working; and just so, you learn to love by loving. All those who think to learn in any other way deceive themselves.

—*Saint Francis de Sales (1567–1622)*

Love is like a Rubik's Cube: There are countless numbers of wrong twists and turns, but when you get it right, it looks perfect no matter what way you look at it.

—*Brian Cramer* ■

BY MARIE ALVERO

LOVE, ACTUALLY

EVERY YEAR, at Christmastime, my husband has to endure my private tradition of watching *Love, Actually*.¹ The movie weaves together several stories in an entirely predictable, mushy way. But each time I watch it I am touched by a different part of the story. I try to get my husband excited about this, but he is not having it! I know this makes me a bit sappy, but I just don't get how someone can't be drawn in by this display of love, tenderness and warmth.

Probably my favorite thing about the movie is the way that it demonstrates all different kinds of love: familial love, grieving love, romantic love, unrequited love, sacrificial love, friendship love, new love and old

1. Richard Curtis. Universal Pictures, 2003.

2. 1 John 4:7

love. It shows the ways we all connect in our human experience, and how love is all around us, if we are willing to look for it.

One of my favorite lines is in the introduction, when a voiceover says: "It seems to me that love is everywhere. Often, it's not particularly dignified or newsworthy, but it's always there—fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, old friends." Sometimes it takes a minute to notice it. Not just because life is busy, but also because it often appears ugly.

It's easy to feel calloused, to think of humanity as a whole as hardened and cruel. But that's simply not true. Love, in the form of kindness, friendship, compassion, affection, service, and sacrifice, is all around us. It seeps through the cracks of indifference,

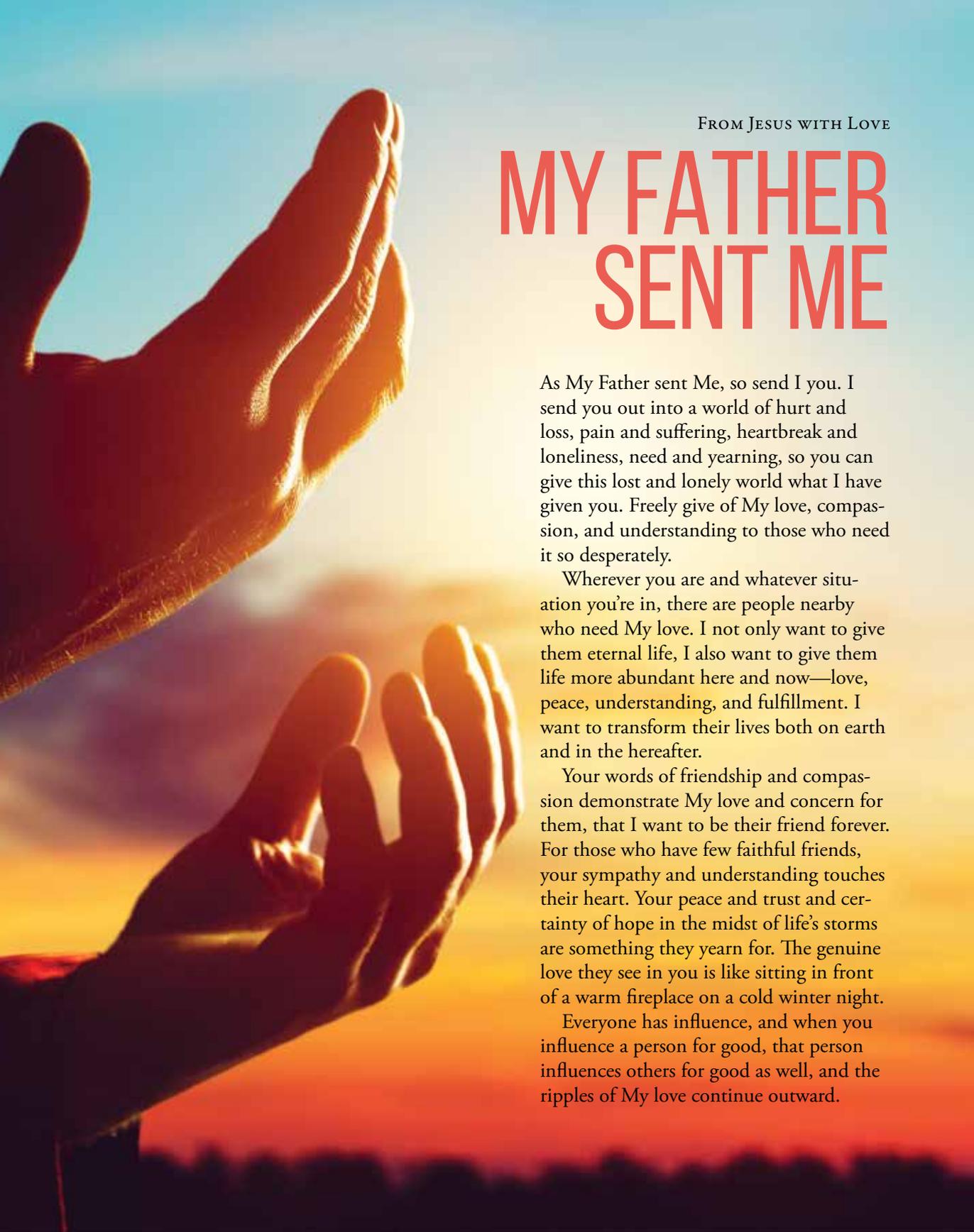
hatred, loneliness, prejudice, pain, and connects us.

The Bible says "Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."² Our ability to love is God's imprint on each of our hearts, even for those who do not call themselves followers of Jesus. All the different ways humans are capable of loving are manifestations of our Creator. In many ways, I think that our response to love is a response to God.

Maybe you aren't into sappy movies, but I hope you take a minute to notice the love around you, and I hope it makes you happy.

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

MY FATHER SENT ME

As My Father sent Me, so send I you. I send you out into a world of hurt and loss, pain and suffering, heartbreak and loneliness, need and yearning, so you can give this lost and lonely world what I have given you. Freely give of My love, compassion, and understanding to those who need it so desperately.

Wherever you are and whatever situation you're in, there are people nearby who need My love. I not only want to give them eternal life, I also want to give them life more abundant here and now—love, peace, understanding, and fulfillment. I want to transform their lives both on earth and in the hereafter.

Your words of friendship and compassion demonstrate My love and concern for them, that I want to be their friend forever. For those who have few faithful friends, your sympathy and understanding touches their heart. Your peace and trust and certainty of hope in the midst of life's storms are something they yearn for. The genuine love they see in you is like sitting in front of a warm fireplace on a cold winter night.

Everyone has influence, and when you influence a person for good, that person influences others for good as well, and the ripples of My love continue outward.