

# 01 LESSON ONE:

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# Love

You might have read about it, seen it in a movie, or simply imagined it in your own mind. Somewhere it has crossed your path. A desire for it lives deep inside you—in all of us. Often in painful ways, its image reminds us of what we don't have, even creating anger in us toward those we blame for stealing its fullness. It taunts our hearts, seductively suggesting that we should have waited longer, or that it could still be had if only we would turn elsewhere. Many of us even thought we had it once, only to find out what we really had was a counterfeit or a well-orchestrated lie.

It is true love. The kind of love made of romance, respect, joy, excitement, hope, and pleasure. A stunning, intense love that is worth the surrender of your own life.

At the altar, most people hope that marriage will produce a life filled with true love's richness, depth, passion, and intimacy. That your lives together would become so intertwined, you would be sad when apart and long for each other until you reunite. That your love would carry you through hard times and make it easy for you to continually serve and desire each other.

Then, life hits. What was once promising begins to feel evasive, even unattainable. It has been well-said that "while love may be blind, marriage is a real eye-opener." How can a craving so real to the human heart be so far from experience?

In reality, the "true love" often described in movies, songs, and social media isn't real love but rather a romanticized emotion defined by feelings and relational highs. Though feelings and relational highs are important, emotions alone will not last. Mountain top moments eventually lead you downhill. Ultimately, this version of love is fleeting. It is not true love.

Even so, the craving for emotional and experiential love persists in you long after you say, "I do!" Why? Because you were created with a need to experience and enjoy something real, something lasting, something more. Much more.

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

(1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

**Q1:** How would you describe true love in your own words?

**Q2:** What has been most influential in forming your view of love to this point in life (your parent’s marriage, family, friends, movies, social media, etc.)? How does this view of love influence the way you interact with your spouse?

God placed in you a desire to fully experience a different kind of love, one that is unfamiliar to the natural world. The love for which you were designed, for which your heart craves, comes only through a sacrificial and selfless commitment. This is love as God intended. This is true love.

In the Bible, God describes love differently from how it is described by many in this world. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (in the margin), God says that love:

**Is patient and kind.** It doesn’t seek instant gratification or immediate change. It offers grace and encouragement instead of retaliation and criticism. It is considerate in actions, attitudes, and words.

**Doesn’t envy or boast.** It celebrates another. It doesn’t have to win, be better than, or one-up the other. True love humbly admits failures and shortcomings rather than excusing or denying them.

**Isn’t rude or insisting on its own way.** Rather than demanding or manipulating to get its own way, it finds joy in serving the other. It studies the other’s needs and desires to care for that person first.

**Is not irritable or resentful.** It can handle interruptions, shortcomings, and disappointments without becoming angry or agitated. It overlooks small offenses, forgives larger ones, and doesn’t bring them up later.

**Does not rejoice at wrongdoing but with truth.** It doesn't celebrate, hide, or endorse sins that harm your relationships with God or others, but honestly addresses and turns from **sin**.

**Bears and endures all things.** It sees the other's hardships as its own and helps bear the burden. It stays completely and actively committed regardless of how it feels or what is received in return.

**Believes and hopes all things.** It lives in a trustworthy manner without deception, keeping no secrets. It believes the best about the other without suspicion and does all it can to make the relationship work.

**Q3:** Which quality of love listed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 do you most naturally demonstrate in your relationships? Which is most difficult for you? Explain.

As you can see, God's definition of love is different from the kind of love promoted in today's world. God's love is not always romantic, pleasurable, or fun. It can also be costly and sometimes painful. But even more, it is enduring and unbreakable as it deepens over time. It celebrates the highs, bears the lows, and sustains you in all seasons. It is far better than the world's definition of love. It is the love for which you were made and the only love that will truly satisfy you.

The first key to experiencing true love in your life is to:

**EMBRACE GOD'S DEFINITION OF LOVE.**

**Q4:** Go back and read your own definition of love in question one and compare your answer to God's definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. How are the descriptions different? How does your definition of love need to change in light of God's definition?

**SIN:** to do or go wrong; to wander from or violate God's law.

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

(Romans 5:8)

*“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God...”*

(1 John 4:7)



**PRAYER OF THE WEEK:**

God help me to understand and receive your love.

Regardless of what you think about God today, he wants you to experience his definition of true love. His love is available to you now. He has gone to great lengths to demonstrate his love for you and to open a door for you to experience true love with him. When you were at your worst, God sacrificially moved towards you (Romans 5:8).

True love goes first, even when it is costly and painful. This kind of love isn't hard; it's impossible. In fact, you cannot experience true love with your spouse without first receiving God's love. You need God's love and help if you want true love in your marriage. His love is bigger than any human's love. You cannot give what you do not have (1 John 4:7).

Wherever you rate your marriage on a scale of 1 to 10—whether your marriage needs a complete resurrection, or you are simply hoping to reconnect with your spouse—re|engage will help you understand how to receive and give love the way God intends.

The great news is that God has initiated true love with you. His love is available for you to receive and draw from as you seek to experience true love with your spouse.

**Q5:** Do you believe that it is impossible for you to experience true love without God's help? Why or why not?

## ACTION ITEMS:

1. Before coming to group, discuss your answers with your spouse.
2. Write a note or email thanking your spouse for making a commitment to come to re|engage and work on your marriage.
3. Scan this code and rate your marriage on a scale of 1-10. Later, you'll be able to see how your relationship has changed through re|engage!
4. Pray the “Prayer of the Week.”

**THE TRUTH ABOUT MARRIAGE:**

**LIE:** I should feel “in love” at all times.

**TRUTH:** Love is more of a conscious decision than a feeling. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 describes love by actions rather than emotions. Often, loving actions bring about loving feelings, not the other way around. Enjoy when you feel “in love”, and always act in loving ways regardless of how you feel.

For additional resources on this lesson see

[reengage.org/love](http://reengage.org/love)

**NOTES:**

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