

THE LOVE DARE

40 Days Love Journey

Day 1: Love is patient

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

—Ephesians 4:2 NIV

TODAY'S DARE

The first part of this dare is fairly simple. Although love is communicated in a number of ways, our words often reflect the condition of our heart. For the next day, resolve to demonstrate patience and to say nothing negative to your spouse at all. If the temptation arises, choose not to say anything. It's better to hold your tongue than to say something you'll regret

Day 2: Love is kind

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

—Ephesians 4:32

TODAY'S DARE

In addition to saying nothing negative to your spouse again today, do at least one unexpected gesture as an act of kindness.

Day 3: Love is not selfish

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.

—Romans 12:10

TODAY'S DARE

Whatever you put your time, energy, and money into will become more important to you. It's hard to care for something you are not investing in. Along with restraining from negative comments, buy your spouse something that says, "I was thinking of you today."

Day 4: Love is thoughtful

How precious also are Your thoughts to me. . . How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.

—Psalm 139:17–18

TODAY'S DARE

Contact your spouse sometime during the business of the day. Have no agenda other than asking how he or she is doing and if there is anything you could do for them.

Day 5: Love is not rude

He who blesses his friend with a loud voice early in the morning, it will be reckoned a curse to him.

—Proverbs 27:14

TODAY'S DARE

Ask your spouse to tell you three things that cause him or her to be uncomfortable or irritated with you. You must do so without attacking them or justifying your behavior. This is from their perspective only.

Day 6: Love is not irritable

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.

—Proverbs 16:32

TODAY'S DARE

Choose today to react to tough circumstances in your marriage in loving ways instead of with irritation. Begin by making a list below of areas where you need to add margin to your schedule. Then list any wrong motivations that you need to release from your life.

Day 7: Love believes the best

[Love] believes all things, hopes all things.

—1 Corinthians 13:7

TODAY'S DARE

For today's dare, get two sheets of paper. On the first one, spend a few minutes writing out positive things about your spouse. Then do the same with negative things on the second sheet. Place both sheets in a secret place for another day. There is a different purpose and plan for each. At some point during the remainder of the day, pick a positive attribute from the first list and thank your spouse for having this characteristic.

Day 8: Love is not jealous

Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire.

—Song of Solomon 8:6 NIV

TODAY'S DARE

Determine to become your spouse's biggest fan and to reject any thoughts of jealousy. To help you set your heart on your spouse and focus on their achievements, take yesterday's list of negative attributes and discreetly burn it. Then share with your spouse how glad you are about a success he or she recently enjoyed.

Day 9: Love makes good impressions

Greet one another with a kiss of love.

—1 Peter 5:14

TODAY'S DARE

Think of a specific way you'd like to greet your spouse today. Do it with a smile and with enthusiasm. Then determine to change your greeting to reflect your love for them.

Day 10: Love is unconditional

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

—Romans 5:8

TODAY'S DARE

Do something out of the ordinary today for your spouse—something that proves (to you and to them) that your love is based on your choice and nothing else. Wash her car. Clean the kitchen. Buy his favorite dessert. Fold the laundry. Demonstrate love to them for the sheer joy of being their partner in marriage.

Day 11: Love cherishes

Husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.

—Ephesians 5:28

TODAY'S DARE

What need does your spouse have that you could meet today? Can you run an errand? Give a back rub or foot massage? Is there housework you could help with? Choose a gesture that says, "I cherish you" and do it with a smile.

Day 12: Love lets the other win

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

—Philippians 2:4

TODAY'S DARE

Demonstrate love by willingly choosing to give in to an area of disagreement between you and your spouse. Tell them you are putting their preference first.

Day 13: Love fights fair

If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

—Mark 3:25

TODAY'S DARE

Talk with your spouse about establishing healthy rules of engagement. If your mate is not ready for this, then write out your own personal rules to "fight" by. Resolve to abide by them when the next disagreement occurs. If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

Day 14: Love takes delight

Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life.

—Ecclesiastes 9:9 HCSB

TODAY'S DARE

Purposefully neglect an activity you would normally do so you can spend quality time with your spouse. Do something he or she would love to do or a project they'd really like to work on. Just be together.

Day 15: Love is honorable

Live with your wives in an understanding way . . . and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.

—1 Peter 3:7

TODAY'S DARE

Choose a way to show honor and respect to your spouse that is above your normal routine. It may be holding the door for her. It might be putting his clothes away for him. It may be the way you listen and speak in your communication. Show your mate that he or she is highly esteemed in your eyes.

Day 16: Love intercedes

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

—3 John 2

TODAY'S DARE

Begin praying today for your spouse's heart. Pray for three specific areas where you desire for God to work in your spouse's life and in your marriage.

Day 17: Love promotes intimacy

He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

—Proverbs 17:9 NIV

TODAY'S DARE

Determine to guard your mate's secrets (unless they are dangerous to them or to you) and to pray for them. Talk with your spouse, and resolve to demonstrate love in spite of these issues. Really listen to them when they share personal thoughts and struggles with you. Make them feel safe.

Day 18: Love seeks to understand

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding.

—Proverbs 3:13

TODAY'S DARE

Prepare a special dinner at home, just for the two of you. The dinner can be as nice as you prefer. Focus this time on getting to know your spouse better, perhaps in areas you've rarely talked about. Determine to make it an enjoyable evening for you and your mate.

Day 19: Love is impossible

Let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

—1 John 4:7

TODAY'S DARE

Look back over the dares from previous days. Were there some that seemed impossible to you? Have you realized your need for God to change your heart and to give you the ability to love? Ask Him to show you where you stand with Him, and ask for the strength and grace to settle your eternal destination.

Day 20: Love is Jesus Christ

While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

—Romans 5:6

TODAY'S DARE

Dare to take God at His Word. Dare to trust Jesus Christ for salvation. Dare to pray, "Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner. But You have shown Your love for me by dying to forgive my sins, and You have proven Your power to save me from death by Your resurrection. Lord, change my heart, and save me by Your grace."

Day 21: Love is satisfied in God

The Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire.

—Isaiah 58:11

TODAY'S DARE

Be intentional today about making a time to pray and read your Bible. Try reading a chapter out of Proverbs each day (there are thirty-one—a full month's supply), or reading a chapter in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). As you do, immerse yourself in the love and promises God has for you. This will add to your growth as you walk with Him.

Day 22: Love is faithful

I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the Lord.

—Hosea 2:20

TODAY'S DARE

Love is a choice, not a feeling. It is an initiated action, not a knee-jerk reaction. Choose today to be committed to love even if your spouse has lost most of their interest in receiving it. Say to them today in words similar to these, "I love you. Period. I choose to love you even if you don't love me in return."

Day 23: Love always protects

[Love] always protects.

—1 Corinthians 13:7 NIV

TODAY'S DARE

Remove anything that is hindering your relationship, any addiction or influence that's stealing your affections and turning your heart away from your spouse.

Day 24: Love vs. Lust

The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

—1 John 2:17

TODAY'S DARE

End it now. Identify every object of lust in your life and remove it. Single out every lie you've swallowed in pursuing forbidden pleasure and reject it. Lust cannot be allowed to live in a back bedroom. It must be killed and destroyed—today—and replaced with the sure promises of God and a heart filled with His perfect love.

Day 25: Love forgives

What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ.

—2 Corinthians 2:10

TODAY'S DARE

Whatever you haven't forgiven in your mate, forgive it today. Let it go. Just as we ask Jesus to "forgive us our debts" each day, we must ask Him to help us "forgive our debtors" each day as well. Unforgiveness has been keeping you and your spouse in prison too long. Say from your heart, "I choose to forgive."

Day 26: Love is responsible

When you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things.

—Romans 2:1 HCSB

TODAY'S DARE

Take time to pray through your areas of wrongdoing. Ask for God's forgiveness, then humble yourself enough to admit them to your spouse. Do it sincerely and truthfully. Ask your spouse for forgiveness as well. No matter how they respond, make sure you cover your responsibility in love. Even if they respond with criticism, accept it by receiving it as counsel.

Day 27: Love encourages

Guard my soul and deliver me; do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in You.

—Psalm 25:20

TODAY'S DARE

Eliminate the poison of unrealistic expectations in your home. Think of one area where your spouse has told you you're expecting too much, and tell them you're sorry for being so hard on them about it. Promise them you'll seek to understand, and assure them of your unconditional love.

Day 28: Love makes sacrifices

He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers.

—1 John 3:16 HCSB

TODAY'S DARE

What is one of the greatest needs in your spouse's life right now? Is there a need you could lift from their shoulders today by a daring act of sacrifice on your part? Whether the need is big or small, purpose to do what you can to meet the need.

Day 29: Love's motivation

Render service with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to men.

—Ephesians 6:7 HCSB

TODAY'S DARE

Before you see your spouse again today, pray for them by name and for their needs. Whether it comes easy for you or not, say "I love you," then express love to them in some tangible way. Go to God in prayer again, thanking Him for giving you the privilege of loving this one special person—unconditionally, the way He loves both of you.

Day 30: Love brings unity

Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

—John 17:11

TODAY'S DARE

Isolate one area of division in your marriage, and look on today as a fresh opportunity to pray about it. Ask the Lord to reveal anything in your own heart that is threatening oneness with your spouse. Pray that He would do the same for them. And if appropriate, discuss this matter openly, seeking God for unity.

Day 31: Love and marriage

A man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

—Genesis 2:24

TODAY'S DARE

Is there a "leaving" issue you haven't been brave enough to conquer yet? Confess it to your spouse today, and resolve to make it right. The oneness of your marriage is dependent upon it. Follow this with a commitment to your spouse and to God to make your marriage the top priority over every other human relationship.

Day 32: Love meets sexual needs

The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

—1 Corinthians 7:3

TODAY'S DARE

If at all possible, try to initiate sex with your husband or wife today. Do this in a way that honors what your spouse has told you (or implied to you) about what

they need from you sexually. Ask God to make this enjoyable for both of you as well as a path to greater intimacy.

Day 33: Love completes each other

If two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?

—Ecclesiastes 4:11

TODAY'S DARE

Recognize that your spouse is integral to your future success. Let them know today that you desire to include them in your upcoming decisions, and that you need their perspective and counsel. If you have ignored their input in the past, admit your oversight and ask them to forgive you.

Day 34: Love celebrates godliness

[Love] does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.

—1 Corinthians 13:6

TODAY'S DARE

Find a specific, recent example when your spouse demonstrated Christian character in a noticeable way. Verbally commend them for this at some point today.

Day 35: Love is accountable

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

—Proverbs 15:22 NIV

TODAY'S DARE

Find a marriage mentor—someone who is a strong Christian and who will be honest and loving with you. If you feel that counseling is needed, then take the first step to set up an appointment. During this process, ask God to direct your decisions and discernment.

Day 36: Love is God's Word

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

—Psalm 119:105

TODAY'S DARE

Commit to reading the Bible every day. Find a devotional book or other resource that will give you some guidance. If your spouse is open to it, see if they will commit to daily Bible reading with you. Begin submitting each area of your life to its guidance and start building on the rock.

Day 37: Love agrees in prayer

If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father.

—Matthew 18:19

TODAY'S DARE

Ask your spouse if you can begin praying together. Talk about the best time to do this, whether it's in the morning, your lunch hour, or before bedtime. Use this time to commit your concerns, disagreements, and needs before the Lord. Don't forget to thank Him for His provision and blessing. Even if your spouse refuses to do this, resolve to spend this daily time in prayer yourself.

Day 38: Love fulfills dreams

Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

—Psalm 37:4

TODAY'S DARE

Ask yourself what your mate would want if it was obtainable. Commit this to prayer, and start mapping out a plan for meeting some (if not all) of their desires, to whatever level you possibly can.

Day 39: Love endures

Love never fails.

—1 Corinthians 13:8

TODAY'S DARE

Spend time in personal prayer, then write a letter of commitment and resolve to your spouse. Include why you are committing to this marriage until death, and that you have purposed to love them

no matter what. Leave it in a place that your mate will find it.

Day 40: Love is a covenant

Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

—Ruth 1:16

TODAY'S DARE

Write out a renewal of your vows and place them in your home. Perhaps, if appropriate, you could make arrangements to formally renew your wedding vows before a minister and with family present. Make it a living testament to the value of marriage in God's eyes and the high honor of being one with your mate.

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