

## Love is a Decision

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

Love is “a maximum of evaluation and a minimum of emotion.”

Ephesians 5:25 — *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

Galatians 5:14 — *The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

1 John 4:21 — *And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

Titus 2:3-4 — *Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children.*

Corinthians 13:7-8 — *It [love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

**To love is a COMMAND.** During our engagement, we heard a speaker say that love is “a maximum of evaluation and a minimum of emotion.” We, like any other engaged couple, didn’t believe that for a minute. We had a maximum of emotion and a minimum of evaluation. But after we were married for awhile, we realized the truth in that statement.

In the three following verses, **God commands us to love.** Now, He never gives us commands we are not capable of obeying. So “love” must be more than a feeling, for how could God command us to “feel”? Love **is** more than emotions, it is a **decision**...a decision to obey God’s command.

**Husbands are commanded to LOVE THEIR WIVES.** Ephesians 5:25 — *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

**We are all commanded to LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR.** Galatians 5:14 — *The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

**We are commanded to LOVE OUR BROTHERS.** 1 John 4:21 — *And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

These are just three of God’s commands “to love.” They are commands we can **choose to obey** whether we “feel” like it or not.



Since we are commanded to \_\_\_\_\_ we must be \_\_\_\_\_ to love even when we don’t \_\_\_\_\_ like it.

**To love is a LEARNING PROCESS** — Titus 2:3-4 — *Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children.*

Again, we see that love is much more than an emotion, because we can be taught to love. This is good news. It means we **can learn** to love our husbands, **learn** to love our wives, even in situations we don’t feel we can.



Since we can be \_\_\_\_\_ to love our mates (Tit. 2:3-4), love must be a \_\_\_\_\_ process.

**We can love despite contrary FEELINGS or the absence of emotion.** 1 Corinthians 13:7-8 — *It [love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

If you are counting on the **feelings of love** to carry your marriage through, you are setting yourself up for disillusionment. The **feelings** of love go up and down, up and down, like a roller coaster. A roller coaster is fun to ride for three to five minutes...but you can’t **live** on one. Love **is** emotional, but it’s also **practical**. It’s the stuff of life...every day...hour by hour...minute by minute.

We have had periods in our lives when we have both had to work. It was during such a time when we got home from work late one evening, quickly fed the family and ran off to a meeting. You know how church meetings can be; what was supposed to be a one-hour meeting, turned into two-and-a-half. It was after ten when we finally dragged through our front door. My (Harold) mind was on one thing, and one thing alone: to get horizontal as quickly as possible. But as I shuffled toward the bedroom, I heard Bette mumble, “I can’t face that kitchen in the morning. I’ve got to do those dishes tonight.” What? The dishes? Now?

As I looked longingly toward the bedroom and then back at Bette trudging toward the kitchen, I knew I had a choice. My feelings were pulling me to my pillow. I was tired; I wanted to choose sleep. I had really **strong feelings** about my need for sleep. But what was the **loving choice**? I

**knew** what it was. We hardly ever have to look far to find the loving choice, do we? It's usually staring us in the face whether we want to see it or not. And I knew that helping Bette in the kitchen was it. This led me to another choice. Was I going to go in the kitchen as a grump and grumble the whole time I helped, or was I going to go in there with a loving attitude? Do you ever do the right thing but with the wrong attitude so your mate will refuse your help, leaving you free to do what you wanted to in the first place? I don't always choose to love despite my feelings, but this time I did. With two doing the job, we finished in fifteen minutes and were asleep in twenty. But those fifteen minutes were profoundly important, because they communicated love to my wife. That simple decision to love **spoke louder than words**.

And I (Bette) have to tell you that Harold's decision to love me in such a practical way meant more than a bouquet of roses. I'm not discounting roses, mind you, but his act of love was far more valuable to me. He **chose** to do the loving thing despite feelings to the contrary. We all face such decisions every day.

In the book, every time you see four little feet walking across the page like this, you know they will be followed by something for you to do.

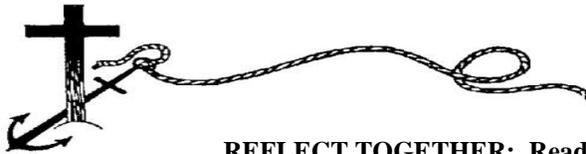


**Describe a similar choice you have made to love your mate when you didn't feel like it.**

**Wife:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Husband:** \_\_\_\_\_

Loving actions speak louder than words.



The **REFLECT TOGETHER** and **PRAY TOGETHER** sections, found at the end of each day's study, are identified with the cross and anchor symbol, signifying the lasting relationship bond that reading God's Word and praying together can fortify.

**REFLECT TOGETHER:** Read Titus 2:1-15. Notice how many people Titus is instructed to teach.

**PRAY TOGETHER:** Father, sometimes it feels like we will never learn to love, but we know you will complete this work in us. Teach us to love more consistently — by choice.

The preceding is one day of study from *Experiencing Oneness*. As you can see, *Experiencing Oneness* is not a book you read, it is a book you DO. It is designed for a husband and wife to work through together in small, bite-sized portions. As you can also see, it is written in an interactive format. This provides you and your mate the opportunity to discuss and apply Biblical truths to your marriage and to your lives. This is how we grow -- as Christians and as married couples.

*Experiencing Oneness* covers 12 important marriage subjects, with each chapter broken into seven small studies which you and your mate can easily complete in 15 to 30 minutes each. This excerpt is taken from day 2 of the chapter on Commitment. We hope you and your mate will do this portion together and discover how much fun it is to grow together.

We especially recommend *Experiencing Oneness* to those of you who are preparing for marriage or are newlyweds. Getting started right -- spending time together in God's Word and praying together -- can help create a life long habit that will do remarkable things for your relationship for the next fifty or sixty years.

Did you know that according to a Harvard study, couples who regularly read the Bible together, pray together, and attend church together, have a divorce rate of less than 1/10th of 1%? Wow! See why we want you to develop these good habits?