

The Love Challenge for Married Men

Love is not just a feeling, but is mostly a decision. It is selfless, sacrificial and transformational, and when it is demonstrated as it was intended, your relationship is likely to be at its best. Most women have no difficulty showing love in this way. Men, however, who have no difficulty solving problems, fixing things, and providing for their families, may struggle with loving as God intended. These next 14 days, use these 14 “Love Challenges,” starting tomorrow, as a way to grow into a more intimate union with your wife and love her genuinely and unconditionally, as God intended.

Challenge 1, Day 1 – Love is Patient: Love will inspire you to become a patient person and help you respond in a positive way to a negative situation. The first part of this challenge is fairly simple. Although love is communicated in a number of ways, our words often reflect the true condition of our hearts. 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 will regret.

Challenge 2, Day 2 – Love is Kind: Kindness is love in action. If patience is how love reacts to minimize a negative circumstance, kindness is how love acts to maximize a positive circumstance. Simply stated, love makes you kind, and kindness makes you likeable. For today’s challenge, in addition to again saying nothing negative to your spouse, do at least one unexpected gesture as an act of kindness. Most importantly, do this act of kindness without expecting her to notice, and without pointing out what you have done.

Challenge 3, Day 3 – Love is Not Selfish: Selfishness is the opposite of love. Unfortunately, we live in a world that is enamored with oneself. Because we are all selfish, we have exceedingly high expectations for our spouse to put us ahead of themselves, but low standards for ourselves to do the same. But choosing to love your wife will defeat selfishness. By putting her needs above your wants, love triumphs. 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.”

Challenge 4, Day 4 – Love is Thoughtful: Love is not a mindless feeling that rides on waves of emotion and falls asleep mentally. It keeps busy in thought, knowing that loving thoughts precede loving actions. For your challenge today, contact your wife at some point during the business of the day. Have no agenda other than asking how she is doing and if there is anything you could do for her to make her day better or easier.

Challenge 5, Day 5 – Love is Not Jealous: Jealousy is one of the strongest drives known to man, and is a common struggle for men and women alike. Because love is not selfish and puts others first, it refuses to let jealousy in. For today’s challenge, resolve 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 her achievements, share with her how glad you are about a personal success she recently enjoyed.

Challenge 6, Day 6 – Love Makes Good Impressions: You can tell a lot about the state of a couple’s relationship from the way they greet each other, both from the words as well as the actions they use towards each other. Think of the opportunities you have to greet your wife on a regular basis. A loving greeting can bless your spouse for her entire day through what she sees, hears and feels. For today’s challenge, think of a specific way you’d like to greet your spouse. Do it with a smile and with enthusiasm. Ensure that each time you greet your spouse, you do it in a way to reflect your love for her.

Challenge 7, Day 7 – Love is Unconditional: The only way that love can last a lifetime is if it’s unconditional. Love is not determined by the one being loved, but rather by the one choosing to love. Today, to show your love, do something out of the ordinary for your spouse, something that proves to you and to her that your love is based on your choice and nothing else. Wash her car. Clean the kitchen. Fold the laundry. Most importantly, demonstrate your love to her for the sheer joy of being her partner in marriage.

Challenge 8, Day 8 – Love Cherishes: The Bible tells us that “Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.” In light of this, think about how you treat your spouse’s physical body. Do you cherish it as your own? Do you treat it

with respect and tenderness? Just as you treasure your eyes, hands and feet, you should treasure your spouse as a priceless gift. For today's challenge, think of a need that your spouse has that you could meet. 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.

Challenge 9, Day 9 – Love Lets the Other Win: Stubbornness seems to come as second nature to most men and women. Typically, within a marriage relationship, defending yourself for the sake of defending yourself is detrimental, and steals away time while causing great frustration. For today's challenge, demonstrate love by willingly choosing to give in to an area of disagreement between you and your wife. Tell her you are putting her preference first.

Challenge 10, Day 10 – Love Takes Delight: One of the most important things for you to learn on this journey is to not just follow your heart, but to lead it. If you do that, you can focus on delighting in your spouse and enjoying her. Today, purposefully neglect an activity that you would normally do so you can spend quality time with your spouse instead. Do something she would love to do, no matter how big or small. Just be together with one another.

Challenge 11, Day 11 – Love is Honorable: To honor someone means to give them respect and high esteem, to treat them as being special and of great worth. We must strive to honor our spouse each day, with all of our interactions. For your challenge today, choose a way to show honor and respect to your wife that is above your normal routine. It may be holding the door, putting away her clothes, or listening and speaking to her in a completely involved way. Whatever it is, show your spouse that she is highly esteemed in your eyes.

Challenge 12, Day 12– Love Intercedes: One of the most loving things you can ever do for your spouse is to pray for her. If you've never felt the need to pray for your wife, then this Advent love challenge would be a perfect time to start. Today, begin praying 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, and be sure to pray for her intentions that she holds in her heart.

Challenge 13, Day 13 – Love Seeks to Understand: If you miss how much you knew your spouse, or feel that this level of intimacy is lacking, one of the best ways to unlock her heart is by making a commitment to know her again. For today's challenge, prepare a special dinner at home for just the two of you. Focus during this time on getting to know your spouse better, especially in areas you've rarely talked about. Determine to make it an enjoyable evening for both of you.

Challenge 14, Day 14 – Love is Satisfied in God: As you grow closer to your spouse, why not use this as an opportunity to grow closer to God as well? Today, be intentional about making a time to read your bible and pray. Try reading a chapter from Proverbs each day, or reading a chapter in the gospels. 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.

Congratulations on completing The Love Challenge! We hope these 14 days have given you the opportunity to grow closer to God and with each other. May God richly Bless your marriage!