

Dgroup Discussion Guide for June 24, 2018
LOVE CONSTANTLY

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13: 7

Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things

The very basic unit of the society is the family and this is how God designed it to be. It is God's desire for each family to be healthy and that is why God had commanded us roles as written by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:

1. Verse 22 says ***Wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord***
2. Verse 25 says ***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her***
3. 6:1 ***Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right***
4. 6:4 ***Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.***

These are just some of the commandments given to each one of us as a member of the family. But then there are so many forces that are destroying and weakening the family. Some of the things that can threaten to break a family apart are: unresolved conflicts, bitterness, lack of communication, lack of trust, and lack of compassion.

So how do we combat these threats? We have to LOVE CONSTANTLY. 1 Corinthians 13 encourages us to LOVE, to bear all things, to believe, to hope, and to endure. We are to persevere in love.

1. BE HUMBLE

Humility is one of the most important aspects of the Christian life. Philippians 2:1-3 says ***therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.*** If we can apply this in our family, we will have peace and we will be able to avoid unnecessary conflict. This is the first step in loving constantly. Without humility we will not be able to consider others as more important than ourselves. Without humility, we will fall prey to the blaming game. Constantly pointing fingers and only thinking of ourselves. Being selfish is something that comes naturally to us. Our first instinct is to put our needs, our wants over someone else's. But when we begin to practice humility, then we will think of others first. And this is where humility begins.

2. REPENT AND FORGIVE

This too is difficult. It is easy to say "I'm sorry" but to truly repent is hard. Consider this: In doing an apology, saying the right words without having the right heart is lying at its best. True repentance is a 180 degree turn. It is not merely saying the words but putting those words into action. In the family, more often than not we take this for granted. Always assuming that our family members will understand and make allowances for us. But then this is not being loving towards them. To constantly do the same thing over and over again without any true repentance.

Forgiveness is instant but the reconciliation is a process. It is not the forgiveness that takes time, it is the reconciliation, the return of the relationship is a process. The trust has to be re-built. But we have to first forgive, to let go of any bitterness or anger in our hearts. Paul writes in Colossians 3:12 - ***13 So as those who have been chosen by God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience bearing with one another, and forgiving each other whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.*** For some people who find it difficult to forgive, we have to wonder if they have truly accepted the forgiveness of God. Because a genuine acceptance of God's forgiveness will compel us to forgive others without limit. If we do not forgive, we will be

trapped in the cage of bitterness. In order for us to Love Constantly, we should be able to forgive and repent. These two go hand in hand.

3. LOVE WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS

As we continue loving people, we should love without expectations. The world teaches us that we have the “right” to expect something from people, from our family. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us **Love IS patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant.** The verb “IS” stresses that we are to continue to love despite of and in spite of any situation you may be in. That is why the first step to love is humility, because if you think of others first before yourself then you will not wait, you will not expect. You will continue to love despite of and in spite of. So regardless of whether our family loves us back, we are to love them constantly.

Love is an unconditional commitment towards imperfect people to seek their highest good which often requires sacrifice resulting in God's glory. – Ptr Peter Tan Chi

Our life statement should then be “I will do my part in showing my love to you regardless if you do yours.” If we all did this, then we would be able to maintain a healthy family relationship

4. BELIEVE THE BEST

We have to continually believe the best in our family members. We have to constantly believe that God is working in the life of our family members. And we will continually to BEAR ALL THINGS and ENDURE ALL THINGS. Paul writes in Philippians 4:8 **Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.** If we follow this principle, then we will not have any assumptions. We will not assume and misunderstand. If we follow this principle, we will only choose to do the pure and honorable thing. If we follow this principle, we will do our best in everything we do, we will always perform in excellence. This is why if we follow this principle, we will constantly do our best, believing only the best, and constantly show love to our family.

5. PRAY FOR YOUR FAMILY CONSISTENTLY

We should always and consistently pray for each member of our family. We should always be on our knees asking God to protect each one. We should always pray that God will continue to be in the center of the life of our family members. Our role is to love our family. Changing them is outside of our control. That is God's arena, we should then leave the results to God. The more we pray for our family, the more we grow in our love for them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is it easy to love constantly?
2. Among the 5 points above, which is the most difficult for you to do in order to love your family?
3. How can we intentionally work on these 5 points?
4. Make a prayer list for your family, write down things you want to specifically pray for each member.