



# guidelines for living

*a 5 minute message*

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THE CHOICE TO LOVE  
(with Bonnie Sala)

**And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:14**

There's nothing like love. It's a powerful force that changes humans. Both young and old caught up in its tide are rendered unable to think clearly or even think much at all. There may be some truth to the saying, "No one falls in love by choice, it is by chance. No one stays in love by chance, it is by work. And no one falls out of love by chance, it is by choice."

We've all been affected by enough broken relationships that a lot of people are putting some thought into finding a love that lasts by relying on the computer metrics of dating services. Among the multitude of dating websites, one website alone, match.com, serves thirty-five million people a month.

Millions have chosen to look for love. But do they realize that there will be daily choices they'll need to make *over and over again*, to make love work? The real work of love can be hard, sometimes not just for days but years. Perhaps that's why Jesus said, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples" (John 13:35 NLT). He knew that making the choice to love is the harder path, not the wide and easy path.

What are the choices love requires us to make?

**1. The choice to see the good in a person every day rather than focusing on the things that bother us.** "You can't love 'em in slices," my dad has been known to say. Every person has flaws and quirks that can be irritating. What are the gifts that your loved one brings to life? Actually making a list of their strengths will help you remember why you've committed to this person in the first place.

**2. The choice to ignore the petty irritations.** Yes, this choice is tough. Especially after they've kept you awake all night with their snoring, there are a week's worth of their dirty clothes on the floor or they keep bugging you with questions when you're exhausted. You can choose your reaction—love lets go of a lot.

**3. The choice to focus on keeping my "side of the street" clean.** In our selfishness, we can quickly point out what we're not getting from a relationship and how the other is failing. Stopping to ask God to show us what we need to correct in our own lives or asking Him to meet our needs, is our part in a love relationship. Which leads us to a fourth and most important choice:



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**4. The choice to rely on God for the strength to choose love.** The kind of love that's described in I Corinthians 13, the, "Love that does not envy or boast;... is not arrogant. . . . is not irritable or resentful;... does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth," that kind of love requires the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Author Elisabeth Elliot used to say, "The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances." Or, not: "Me...*with a different person.*"

Am I choosing to daily surrender my will to Christ, to deny myself? When I give God an open door to work in my life it means that there will be less of me and more of Him. More of Him gives me more capacity to choose love.

I wonder how many would sign up for match.com if they had to agree to the pledge my minister dad has shared with the many couples he has counseled over the course of 60 years: "Ask yourself," he says, "If you are willing to make an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person, to meet the needs of that person, in such a way that requires sacrifice."

*That's*, the choice to love.

Resource reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.