

## Love endures all things

- 1 Corinthians 13:7
- In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Stephen Um mentions a book by a UNC professor of psychology called, "Love 2.0" Barbara Frederickson believes it is time to redefine love, you know, give it an upgrade from the old, stodgy way we see it now. She says the old love, the kind the Bible speaks of, is out of date. What does her new model look like? Here are her words: "Love is not exclusive." "Love's timescale is far shorter than we typically think. Love...is not lasting." And, "love is not unconditional." This is what love is, for Dr. Frederickson: "Love is that micro-moment of connection that you share with another human being." "Love is an emotion, a momentary state." "Right now (she writes), at this very moment in which I am crafting this sentence, I do not love my husband. Our positivity resonance, after all, only lasts as long as we two are engaged with one another. The same goes for you and your loved ones. Unless you're cuddled up with someone right now, you don't love anyone." Does that sound like an upgrade, a new and improved love? No, and to paraphrase Stephen Um, it sounds like going from an iPhone 10 to a rotary phone. (this is a rotary phone, for all of you under 30).
- The problem, the fatal flaw in that thinking is that we have located love inside ourselves, which gives it an expiration date, and greatly limits what it can be. We have viewed it as something we do, a muscle we exercise, an emotion we feel, an experience we have. Um writes, "If love is to be love, if it is to be what we come to know it to be in all its mystery and magic, if love is to be the love that we desire, crave, and long for, then it will necessarily have to come from outside of us." Only God that do that. "In love he bears us the believer upon his shoulders. In love God endures us in all of our unendurableness. The beautiful impossibility of love is a beautiful possibility in the hands of God."
- Let's look today at the final 4 of 15 facets of love. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- **Love bears all things**
- This could also be translated, "love covers all things." That's what the verb means in the Greek. It means to conceal, to cover over in silence. Love hides the faults of others and covers them up. Love does the very opposite of gossip. Peter writes about love this way when he says, "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8) It is a different word but has the same meaning. I thought about John 8, and the woman who was caught in the act of adultery by the Pharisees. Remember? They dragged her to Jesus to expose her in her sin, but also, they hoped, to expose a weakness in Jesus. Would he do what the Mosaic law required and have this woman put to death by stoning? They were looking for anything they could to bring a charge against the Lord. You remember, Jesus bent down and wrote something on the ground. We are not told what he wrote. The Pharisees continued to press him about this woman's sins and what was he going to do about it, and he said, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." He bent down and continued to write with his finger on the ground. Then one by one, starting with the oldest, the Pharisees walked away, and Jesus was left alone with the woman. Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."
- The Pharisees exposed the sin of the woman; Jesus covered it. He loved her, not by dismissing her sin, but by welcoming her into forgiveness, and restoration. He gave her a new start, a new way of living, a new love that she had never experienced before. His love covered her and gave her hope. When we bear with one another, we don't agree with them in their sin, or encourage them in it. We cover them, and help them to grow from that place. A husband and a wife who love each other are careful to cover each other when one sins. That means they speak well of their spouse in front of them AND they speak well of their spouse behind their back. They don't put on display the sins of their spouse for others to hear and wag their heads and sympathize. Love covers all things.
- **Love believes all things.**
- This is not an excuse for Christians to be lacking in discernment and gullible. No! There's way too much of that going around. If the pastor is preaching a prosperity gospel, this is not where someone says, "You know, I'm not sure what he is saying is right, but hey, 'love believes all things!'" No, the Bible is clear

on this. Hebrews 5: 12-14, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” ‘Love believes all things’ is not a recipe for Christians to stay babies in their faith.

- However, I think the context of this phrase, “love believes all things” is that love believes for the best in other people. When we love, we expect the best. It means that we are willing to overlook the offenses and the failures of others. When we refuse to do this, we start developing a critical spirit. We expect others to let us down. We look for ways in which they are letting us or others down. We begin to believe that, no matter what they are *saying*, they are really up to no good. We assign motives to their behavior (and remember, in our flesh, we always assign circumstantial motives for our own behavior, and character motives for others: “I was late because the alarm didn’t go off. He was late because he’s a slacker.”)
- Ultimately, failure to ‘believe all things’ is an offense against God, who created that person, saved that person, loves that person, and will never give up working in his life. May God help us to not stand in his place, but to humble ourselves in admitting that we, too, are a work in progress, with lots of areas where we fail, every day. Love believes all things.
- **Love hopes all things.**
- If the previous truth, “love believes all things” has its eye on the present, “love hopes all things” is looking to the future. Paul uses the verb, “to hope” 19 times in his letters, and that’s the large majority of the 32 times it is used in all of the New Testament. This is the Christian hope that expects and waits with faith, not the finger-crossing angst that the world calls hope. It is often used in reference to our hope in salvation, as Paul said to Titus: “ for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began...” Our hope is an anchor that holds, not a helium balloon that slowly dies and falls to the ground.
- The context here, though, has to do with how we relate to other people. We believe for the best in them. And we hope all things, which means we never consider another Christian to be a lost cause, even when we see them fall hard, or stray from the truth. We believe as followers of Christ that everyone who truly belongs to him will be sanctified and will mature and will one day be glorified. Our hope is not IN them, but in Christ FOR them. “I am sure of this,” Paul wrote, “that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil 1:6)
- If we stop “hoping all things,” we can give up on people. We can get tired of praying, get tired of calling, even get tired of caring. We can harden our hearts. I am so thankful for the people in my life who have hoped all things for me, even at times when they wanted to give up and move on. Do you have people like that in your life? Of course, you do.
- We see that in the Lord, when he waited for Peter on the shore. It was a few days after the resurrection, and a few days after Peter’s denial. Peter denied Jesus three times after telling him that even if everyone denied Jesus, HE never would. You can count on me, Lord! Jesus waited for Peter to swim to him from the boat, and as they ate, he asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” He was doing at least two things in that wonderful moment of restoration. He was giving Peter, who denied him three times, an opportunity to confess his love for Jesus, three times. And the Lord was assuring Peter that he was still his brother, and that Jesus would never stop “hoping all things” for Peter. Jesus will never stop hoping all things for you and for me, as well.
- **Love endures all things.**
- The verb used here is a compound word that combines ‘remain’ and ‘under.’ To remain under, and we usually think of endurance needed for a physical trial or a spiritual crisis that we personally are going through. I remember a few years ago when I was hanging upside-down in a chair so my retina would shift a little and be in the right location while the doctor, on his knees on the floor, used his laser to weld the retina back into place. Every time he pulled the trigger on the laser, it felt like he was stabbing my eyeball with an ice pick. Over and over for 45 minutes. I praised God when it was over, out loud, and I know it was only the grace of God that helped me to endure it. And then I thought of some of you, and

many I have known in my life, who suffer that kind of pain, in their back or their head or other places on a daily basis for years and years. Only by God's grace can anyone endure such suffering.

- The context, here, though is love for others. And the encouragement for us is that when we love people, we endure with them. It means that we are willing to stay in a hard place with them for their sake, instead of looking for a way of escape, a way to an easier place. Even when they are making our lives difficult, we are not looking for the escape hatch. Erik Raymond writes, "If our fellow Christians are going to grow, it isn't God's design that they do it alone. And let's face it: some Christians' lives are train-wrecks. Being close to these people means hassle, heartbreak, and offense...but (when it comes to love that endures) Christians buy tickets for trains they know will wreck."
- Why would we get on that train? Because love endures all things.
- Summary: love is amazing, isn't it? It covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. And as we will see next week, "love never ends."
- Prayer