

THE
Love Dare

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NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The Love Dare

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RECEIVE THIS AS A WARNING.
THIS FORTY-DAY JOURNEY CANNOT
BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.

IT IS A CHALLENGING AND OFTEN
DIFFICULT PROCESS, BUT AN INCREDIBLY
FULFILLING ONE. TO TAKE THIS DARE
REQUIRES A RESOLUTE MIND AND A
STEADFAST DETERMINATION.

IT IS NOT MEANT TO BE SAMPLED OR BRIEFLY
TESTED, AND THOSE WHO QUIT EARLY WILL
FORFEIT THE GREATEST BENEFITS. IF YOU
WILL COMMIT TO A DAY AT A TIME FOR FORTY
DAYS, THE RESULTS COULD CHANGE YOUR
LIFE AND YOUR MARRIAGE.

CONSIDER IT A DARE, FROM OTHERS
WHO HAVE DONE IT BEFORE YOU.



PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY

Author's Preface

When *The Love Dare* was first published in 2008, no one fully anticipated the response. We were humbled and surprised that it quickly became an international best seller and has remained on *The New York Times* list for more than three years. Millions of people around the world took the Love Dare journey and began learning and practicing these principles in their relationships. Countless e-mails poured in, sharing how romance was being rekindled, dying marriages were being saved, and eyes were being opened to the nature of true, committed love. Marriage counselors and pastors started using the book to strengthen the couples under their care. Even divorce attorneys and judges were rerouting couples to the movie *Fireproof* and *The Love Dare* instead of to court.

We were moved to hear from soldiers returning home from war using *The Love Dare* to turn around their struggling marriages. Empty nesters shared with delight how they were falling in love again. One man personally went through the book six times with his wife because of how much they were learning and enjoying the experience together. We even heard about an elderly man who stood up at a public event and spontaneously cried out, "I want everyone to know that I just took the Love Dare and have never loved my wife more than I do right now!"

We thank God for every person, marriage, and family that has benefited and been blessed by this journey. We recognize that He is the One who changes hearts and resurrects dead marriages. We are so grateful that He allowed us to join Him in sharing with this generation these timeless truths about love.

So it is with gratefulness that we present this updated

version of *The Love Dare* for your use. It is more than just a new cover. We have carefully gone back through and strengthened almost every chapter from the original manuscript, adding fresh concepts while still maintaining the overall feel and format. We've also provided some new resources in the appendix and shared actual reader responses at the end of each day to encourage you on your journey.

It's still *The Love Dare* . . . only better!

If this is your first time going through, you will discover that some principles may seem simple and second nature to you, while others are new concepts outside of your usual box. The key is not what you already know about love or discover as you read, but what you will actually do and implement into your relationship on a consistent basis. Merely understanding these truths won't transform your marriage. They must be applied to your relationship. Love must be a daily, active verb, not a dormant comprehension or feeling. Anytime you think, "I already know that," you should follow it up with, "But do I *do* that?" We hope this book and experience will jump-start you into a new, dynamic way of thinking and living.

As you begin, here are five questions that have repeatedly surfaced that we would like to answer for you.

1. *Should I do the Love Dare alone, or with my spouse?*

If your spouse will go through the book with you, then consider reading it together and have fun attempting to "outdo" each other with every dare. If you don't think your spouse will join in, then consider keeping it a secret, and enjoy making them curious, wondering what is going on.

2. *What if my spouse finds out and says, "You are only doing all these nice things for me because this book says to do them"?*

Simply say something like, "No one is forcing me to do any of these things. I'm choosing to do them. Yes, I'm getting ideas

from a book, but the reason I'm reading it in the first place is because I want to become a more loving person and learn to better express love to you. Now that you know about this, I dare you to go through it with me."

3. *What if I fall behind and can't keep up?*

Don't feel guilty if you can't follow every dare perfectly. Go at your own pace. If you struggle at any point, then remember that moving slowly and completing the journey is more important than finishing it in forty days. But do your best and try to keep up, adjusting as needed.

4. *What if I am currently separated or divorced?*

Get creative rather than giving up. Focus on doing what you can feasibly do for your spouse or your ex. Some people in the past have just read the book, saved up dares, and then completed appropriate ones when opportunities arose during limited moments of interaction. Others have turned the dares into prayers for their spouse or completed them through the mail or over the Internet. Simply adapt to your situation and take on the challenge for your own benefit as well. Couples who are separated by job transfers, military duties, or travel schedules can also apply some of these creative approaches and still enjoy the blessings of the experience.

5. *What if my spouse does not respond at all to this?*

Just keep going. This journey is more about you learning to love than how your spouse responds. We've found that some spouses respond well right away. Others just need more time. If there are years of pain and emotional damage built up, it will take greater nourishment and slower healing over time. Even if you do everything right, your spouse may not know how to receive love and may initially react negatively as a test to see how sincere and consistent you are. Be patient and think long-term. One man relentlessly went through *The Love Dare* three times

before his wife finally broke and turned back to him to restore their marriage. Even if she had not, what he was learning was priceless to his own life. Never underestimate the power of unconditional love. Take on the challenge and know that you are not alone in this journey, and that others are cheering you on.

We were both reminded recently just how precious the gift of marriage is, when a couple shared with us their personal story of reuniting and being remarried after being divorced for twenty-seven years. We were deeply inspired by their tearful testimony. It confirmed again for us that even during the hardest times, marriage is always priceless and worth fighting for.

Our hope for you is that this adventure will add a fresh dose of the extraordinary to your relationship. Then as you learn new things, be sure to share your story with others to inspire and encourage them in their journey! Dare to love!

Blessings to you,

Stephen and Alex Kendrick

Authors, *The Love Dare*

"Pursue love." (1 Corinthians 14:1a)



AND LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER
IN ORDER TO STIR UP LOVE AND GOOD WORKS.

HEBREWS 10:24 NKJV



NOW LET'S BEGIN

Introduction

The Scriptures say that God designed and created marriage as a good thing. It is a beautiful, priceless gift. He uses marriage to help us eliminate loneliness, multiply our effectiveness, establish families, raise children, enjoy life, and bless us with relational intimacy.

But beyond this, marriage also shows us our need to grow and deal with our own issues and self-centeredness through the help of a lifelong partner. If we are teachable, we will learn to do the one thing that is most important in marriage—to *love*. This powerful union provides the path for you to learn how to love another imperfect person unconditionally. It is wonderful. It is difficult. It is life-changing.

This book is about love. It's about learning and daring to live a life filled with loving relationships. And this journey begins with the person who is closest to you: your spouse. May God bless you as you begin this adventure.

But be sure of this: it will take courage. If you accept this dare, you must take the view that instead of *following* your heart, you are choosing to *lead* it. The world tells you to follow your heart, but if you are not leading it, then someone or something else is. The Bible says that “the heart is more deceitful than all else” (Jeremiah 17:9), and it will always pursue that which feels right at the moment.

We dare you to think differently—choosing instead to *lead your heart* toward that which is best in the long run. This is a key to lasting, fulfilling relationships.

The Love Dare journey is not a process of trying to change your spouse to be the person you want them to be.

You've no doubt already discovered that efforts to change your husband or wife have ended in failure and frustration. Rather, this is a journey of exploring and demonstrating genuine love, even when your desire is dry and your motives are feeling low. The truth is, love is a decision and not just a feeling. It is selfless, sacrificial, and transformational. And when love is truly demonstrated as it was intended, your relationship is much more likely to change for the better.

Each day of this journey will contain three very important elements: *First*, a unique aspect of love will be discussed. Read each of these carefully and be open to a new understanding of what it means to genuinely love someone.

Second, you will be given a specific dare to do for your spouse. Some will be easy and some very challenging. But take each dare seriously, and be creative and courageous enough to attempt it. Don't be discouraged if outside situations prevent you from accomplishing a specific dare. Just pick back up as soon as you can and proceed with the journey.

Last, you will be given journal space to log what you are learning and doing and how your spouse is responding. Take advantage of this space to capture what is happening with both you and your mate. These notes will record your progress and become priceless and helpful to you in the future.

Remember, you have the responsibility to protect and guide your heart. Don't give up and don't get discouraged. Resolve to lead your heart and to make it through to the end. Learning to truly love is one of the most important things you will ever do.

*Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love.
But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)*



IF I SPEAK WITH THE TONGUES OF MEN AND
OF ANGELS, BUT DO NOT HAVE LOVE, I HAVE
BECOME A NOISY GONG OR A CLANGING CYMBAL.

IF I HAVE THE GIFT OF PROPHECY,
AND KNOW ALL MYSTERIES AND ALL
KNOWLEDGE; AND IF I HAVE ALL FAITH,
SO AS TO REMOVE MOUNTAINS,
BUT DO NOT HAVE LOVE, I AM NOTHING.

AND IF I GIVE ALL MY POSSESSIONS TO
FEED THE POOR, AND IF I SURRENDER MY
BODY TO BE BURNED, BUT DO NOT HAVE LOVE,
IT PROFITS ME NOTHING.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1–3



DAY 1

Love is patient

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. —Ephesians 4:2 NIV

Love works. It is life's purest and most powerful motivator and has far greater depth and meaning than most people realize. It gives courage to a coward, wisdom to a fool. It always does what is best for others and can empower us to face the greatest of problems.

Love can motivate a man to put away childish things, provide for his family, and take passionate stands for what he believes in—like crossing an ocean to fight for his country. Love can drive a woman to connect emotionally in relationships, comfort the hurting around her, protect her children, and extend her hand in kindness to those in need.

We are born with a lifelong thirst for love. Our hearts desperately need it like our lungs need oxygen. Love changes our motivation for living. Relationships become meaningful with it. No marriage is successful without it.

Love is built on two pillars that best define what it is. Those pillars are *patience* and *kindness*. All other characteristics of love are extensions of these two attributes. And that's where your dare will begin. With *patience*.

Love inspires you to become a patient person. When you choose to be patient, you respond in a positive way to a negative situation. You are *slow* to anger. You choose to have a long fuse instead of a quick temper. Rather than being restless and demanding, love helps you settle down and begin extending mercy to those around you.

No one likes to be around impatient people. Impatience overreacts in angry, foolish, regrettable ways. But the irony of anger toward a wrong is that it spawns new wrongs of its own. Anger almost never makes things better. In fact, it usually generates additional problems. It will trample on long-term relationships while reacting to short-term mishaps.

But *patience* stops problems in their tracks. More than biting your lip, more than claspng a hand over your mouth, patience takes a needed deep breath. It clears the air. It stops foolishness from whipping its scorpion tail all over the room. Patience is a choice to control your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you, and it shows discretion instead of returning evil for evil. It brings an internal calm to an external storm.

If your spouse offends you, do you quickly retaliate, or do you stay under control? Do you find that anger is your emotional default when treated unfairly? If so, you are spreading poison rather than medicine.

If you were to take off its mask, you'd see that anger is often an emotional reaction flowing out of our own ignorance, foolishness, or selfishness. Patience, however, makes us wise. It says, "Help me understand," instead of, "How dare you!" It doesn't rush to judgment, but puts our feelings on *pause* so that we can fully listen to what the other person is saying. It stands in the doorway where anger is clawing to burst in, but waits to see the whole picture before determining its best response. The Bible says, "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly" (Proverbs 14:29).

As sure as a lack of patience will turn your home into a war zone, the practice of patience will foster peace and quiet. "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute" (Proverbs 15:18). Statements like these from the Bible

book of Proverbs are clear principles with timeless relevance. Patience is where love meets wisdom. And every marriage needs that combination to stay healthy.

Love helps give your spouse permission to be human. It understands that everyone fails . . . daily. So when they make a mistake, it patiently chooses to give them more time than they deserve to correct it. Patience gives you the amazing ability to hold on during the tough times in your relationship rather than bailing out under the pressure.

So test yourself. How long is your fuse? How quickly do you adopt a bad attitude? Are you willing to wait with a smile? Can your spouse count on having a patient wife or husband to deal with? Can she know that locking her keys in the car will be met by your calm understanding rather than a demeaning lecture that makes her feel childish? Can he know that being found watching a football game won't automatically invite a loud-mouthed laundry list of better ways he should be spending his time?

What would the tone and volume of your home be like if you tried this biblical approach: "See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:15)?

Few of us do patience very well, and none of us does it naturally. But wise men and women will pursue it as an essential ingredient to their marriage relationships. That's a good starting point to demonstrate true love.

This Love Dare journey is a process, and the first thing you must resolve to do is to demonstrate patience on a daily basis. Think of it as a marathon, not a sprint. But it's a race worth running. Since we should never stop loving, we should never stop showing patience. It should be refreshed in supply every morning as the sun rises.



THE FIRST PART OF THIS DARE IS FAIRLY SIMPLE. ALTHOUGH LOVE IS COMMUNICATED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, OUR WORDS OFTEN REFLECT THE 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'LL REGRET.

___ Check here when you've completed today's dare.

Did anything happen today to cause anger toward your mate? Were you tempted to think disapproving thoughts and to let them come out in words? How did you handle that?

Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. (James 1:19)

