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How to Love When You Feel Like Leaving

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- 1 | The Love Struggle
- 2 | The Love Commandment
- 3 | You're In Debt. Forever.
- 4 | What is Love?
- 5 | How Love Works
- 6 | How to Walk In Love
- 7 | Conclusion
- 8 | Meet Kevin & Cetelia Bullard

1 | The Love Struggle

Have you ever thought that marriage would be easier, and perhaps much more enjoyable, if your mate would just stop doing _____ ? (Fill in the blank with whatever your mate is doing that makes marriage unpleasant for you.)

If you've gotten past the "my mate can do no wrong because we love each other so much" phase of marriage, then you probably filled in the blank with more than a few things.

Don't fret. You're not alone, and you're not a bad person. You haven't done anything wrong. In fact, it's actually quite natural for you to think in these terms from time to time. It's a sign of being human, and a clear sign that you can benefit from the thoughts in this digital book.

Love. This word is often cited as the cure for hurt feelings, broken dreams, unfulfilled expectations, and dashed hopes. Love is the buzzword in relationships that marriage educators & advocates turn to whenever the going gets tough, emotions run high, unforgiveness mounts, and one or both spouses are ready to call it quits.

Love has been defined as a verb, a choice, a feeling, and spiritual force. First Corinthians chapter 13 has been referred to over and over as the baseline for love, and preachers all over the world have given their finest sermons while talking about the imperative for husbands and wives to love each other to make their marriage work.

Still, loving can be a struggle at times. There are times when you feel a need to give full vent to your emotions, and to justify why you feel the way you do. You feel you've earned the right to be mad, and need time to "enjoy" these feelings that are dumping toxins into your body.

As wonderful as marriage is, it can be downright difficult at times. There are times when you'd rather do anything other than love your mate. There are times when it seems that you have been put in an unfair situation, and are being forced to be the "bigger person." Well, you're right, but the thing is, that is true for everyone, including your mate.

In this mini digital book, you'll learn about the love commandment, why you'll be in debt forever, why you have the ability to love your mate, and how to do it. Also, you'll

discover that God is actively involved in helping you love your mate, and that you are His co-worker with a critical role to play in making this all happen.

That said, let's dive in!

2 | The Love Commandment

Let me set the scene for you:

When Jesus was about to be crucified, He sat with His disciples in the upper room for a final meal. He had been with them for just over three years, had given them countless instructions, taught them how to pray, and had shown them miraculous demonstrations of what one could do when empowered by God's Spirit. Still, He wasn't finished teaching. There was one more thing this unlikely group of world changers needed to know.

After Judas left the table to initiate the betrayal process, Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."¹

Have you ever considered the disciples' reaction when they heard this command from Jesus? Let's consider it for a moment.

It's dark out, and the night air is still and quiet. They're just four days removed from Jesus' ticker tape parade entrance into the city. The hungry, feeble, pushy crowds who have wanted access to Jesus for the past three years are nowhere in sight. Jesus has just washed their feet. They have bread and wine on the table, and they're just sitting around talking as friends.

The disciples are clueless about Jesus' impending betrayal, arrest, beating, and crucifixion. They also have no idea that they are about to run away in fright from the One they committed to follow for the past 36 months. As far as they're concerned, it's just another normal, night in Jerusalem.

Seriously, is it too hard to love anyone in an environment like that?

When Jesus gave the command, each disciple thought to himself, "Sure, okay. I can do that. This new command has to be easier to keep than the hundreds that are in the Mosaic law. It's just *one* command. Certainly, I can do this."

¹ John 13:34-35, <http://bible.us/59/jhn.13.34-35.esv>

I Do

For a moment, let's leave Jerusalem and go to your wedding ceremony. See yourself standing at the altar. Recall how you felt when you said, "I do," the words that have united millions of couples around the world. Perhaps you had family and friends surrounding you with everyone dressed to the nines.

You had your favorite songs being played or sung at the ceremony, and the decorations were just right. You and your mate both looked amazing, and as you stared into one another's eyes, you thought about the good times to come. You thought about the family you'd raise and nurture. You thought about the trips you'd take, the love you'd make, and the memories you'd create. When the officiant encouraged you to love one another, and asked you if you'd do it, you had no problem agreeing that you would love.

Seriously, is it too hard to love anyone in an environment like that?

It's doubtful that you were thinking about the hard times that were to come. It's unlikely that you said, "I do," thinking about how your mate would wound you emotionally. You probably weren't thinking about the possibility of your mate having an affair, insulting you, giving you the silent treatment, mismanaging the finances, not getting along with your parents, denying you sex, turning the kids against you, or any other action that has crippled your marriage.

When you said, "I do," you were simply thinking about the moment, and how exhilarating it was to get married.

This is the same mindset the disciples had when Jesus gave them the commandment to love. Following through on Jesus' command was going to be a cinch because the environment, emotions, and energy were all positive and made the command simple to follow.

What they later realized, and what you realized some point after the wedding, was that the environment, emotions, and energy are not always positive. The command to love takes more than simply reading it in the Bible, hearing someone tell you to do it, or gritting your teeth to make it happen.

It takes God, Himself, living within you, motivating you, and empowering you to make it happen. Why? Because this love, unlike anything you've ever seen before, is

impossible to perform and maintain on a consistent basis in your own strength. It takes God's help to love the way God has commanded you to love. Especially since you *always* have to give this love.

End of this sample Marriage Works! digital minibook.

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