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INTRODUCTION: **THE CHALLENGE**

When it comes to loving each other, we all have plenty of room to grow. If you're a mother, you were automatically enrolled in a crash course on love as soon as your body became home for a new little person. Morning sickness, swollen ankles, organs trying to function normally while their space is overtaken – these are early opportunities for laying down our lives for our children.

It's easy to love a sweet little newborn as he's placed into our arms (especially since it means labor is over!). It gets a little harder when a sleep-deprived brain can't figure out why he won't quit crying. Toss a toddler or two (complete with old sin natures) into the mix, along with a husband who still rightfully wants and needs your attention, and it becomes painfully obvious that we're not nearly as loving as we used to think we were!

We need to know how to love when it's hard.

That's why I would like to propose a challenge to you. Join me in devoting just **five minutes** a day (or more if you can), getting to know just **one short chapter** (thirteen verses!) of the Bible better. When we're done, you'll be armed and ready to put it into action in your home.

For the next thirty days or so (you can take it at your own pace), let's read and study 1 Corinthians 13 together.

When we finish, we will have spent more than **two-and-a-half hours** studying -- in detail -- this powerful and concise chapter on godly love! You will probably have the chapter mostly memorized, and you will see that a little bit of time each day can add up to a lot of wisdom, with the Holy Spirit's help!

What About Your Children?

Many of our challenges to love throughout the day involve our children, don't they? While we're learning how to love them in a godly way, they need to learn how to love when it's hard, too.

That's why **every lesson in this book also includes a lesson designed especially for your children!** These are optional. You can decide how you want to use (or ignore) these.

- You might choose to complete this entire study yourself before using the children's lessons with your kids.
- You might decide to complete your lesson early in the morning, and then do the children's lesson with them later in the day.
- You could just do the children's lesson along with them, and skip the adult portion of the lesson (but you'll miss out on a lot!). If you're struggling for time, doing this along with your children will at least ensure that you get some Bible study in during the day.
- You could do your own study, and let your husband lead the family in the children's lesson during family worship each day.
- Be creative! If your children aren't all toddlers, they may even be able to do some of the children's lessons while you do your own study. You never know until you try.

Are you ready?

If you're new to these *Thirty Days* studies, be sure to take some time to read **Appendix D** and **Appendix E**. Here you will find a short list of materials you will need, plus some ideas for making time to really and truly study your Bible for at least a few minutes almost every day.



DAY 1: CONTEXT

Context is *always* important. Misunderstandings happen when one person overhears a comment made by another person without hearing its context, or when we only hear *part* of what a person has said to us without hearing *all* that they said. If a child wanders through the kitchen just as Daddy says, "... So we're going to the beach," he may run to find his bucket and shovel, not realizing that Daddy and Mama were discussing where the family should go for their family vacation *three months from now*.

If we don't hear the whole conversation, it's easy to jump to the wrong conclusions. Today we're going to start our study by looking briefly at the context of 1 Corinthians 13. We're going to start our study of 1 Corinthians 13 by reading *1 Corinthians 12*.

Assignment:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open the Word to you today as you read. Then carefully **read the entire twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians**. Remember as you read that Paul was writing to the Corinthian church in order to help and admonish them. Established in the chief city of Greece, surrounded by Greek philosophy and pagan idol worship, the Corinthian church had its share of challenges. Its members bickered over many things – theology, practical living, and spiritual gifts, to name a few. This is good to keep in mind as you read.

When you have finished reading chapter 12, **write a two or three-sentence summary** of the chapter. What is Paul saying to the Corinthians in this part of his letter? How does he end the chapter? What is he preparing us for in chapter 13?

Optional: *If you have time*, read 1 Corinthians 1 as well. This will give you an even better idea of what Paul's purpose was in writing to the Corinthians.

For your children:

Not every assignment for your children will be this crazy. But we want to get them interested right from the start!

You will need:

- Bibles
- 3 or more blindfolds
- 3 or more pairs of earplugs or cotton balls
- A special treat that everyone enjoys eating

Do **your assignment** above so you are familiar with 1 Corinthians 12. Then read verses 12-27 aloud with your children (take turns reading verses if your children are readers). Read in a translation that your children can understand.

Then assign each of your children one of these body parts:

- Eyes
- Ears
- Hand
- Foot

If you don't have this many children, assign as many parts as you can. Or wait until Daddy gets home when both he and you can join in on the fun! If you have more than four children, get creative. (I'm sure you're used to doing that.) Maybe you can divide into two groups, or have two of some body parts.

Day 1: Context

- Set a special treat on the table – something everyone likes. Let them see it. (This may get a little messy, so do this in a place you can clean up easily.)
- Now put a **blindfold** on everyone but the “eyes”.
- Put **earplugs** in the ears of everyone but the person who has been assigned to be the “ears”.
- Tie everyone’s **hands behind their backs** except the “hand” person.
- Have everyone except “the foot” **sit down**. They can no longer use their feet.

When you’re done, you will have a group of children who will need to work together if they are going to get anything done. Only one can see, only one can hear, only one can use his hands, and only one can walk.

Tell them that they can have the treat as soon as you *whisper* the word “go”, **but** they can *only use the body part that they have been assigned*. They have to figure out how to work together to eat that treat.

The “ears” will have to listen for your whisper.

The “eyes” will have to direct the feet to the table, but the “feet” are going to have to figure out how to get the “hands” to help him pick up the treat and feed it to everyone.

Eating may get a bit messy, but it should be a blast! When everyone is done, discuss how God has made our bodies with lots of different parts that all work together to help us do what we do.

Then talk about how God has made the body of Christ, the Church, in the same way. We need each other. We aren’t effective alone. We’re like different parts of the human body that all have to work together to really accomplish anything.

Explain that the people in the church of Corinth were forgetting that. They were trying to serve without working with others. They were

Day 1: Context

thinking *their* gifts were a lot more important than other people's. They were arguing and boasting.

These are the people that Paul is going to teach about godly love.