



## Becky Combee Ministries, Inc.

### The Love Challenge

BY BECKY COMBEE

Life always brings challenges to God's New Testament command, "Love one another."<sup>1</sup> Frequently, if not daily, we come face to face with Brother Sharp Tongue, Sister Busy Body, or that Get-out-of-my way kid, and these confrontations derail us. Yet, despite these argumentative personalities, the command of love does not change. The Word of God declares that we must love one another.

These contentious people are often family and friends. You know – some of them live at your house. We do, after all, tend to say and do what pleases us even if it hurts those we love the most. Worse, we have a tendency to reciprocate. If you yell at me, I will yell at you. If you start something, I will finish it. In so doing, we become a part of the disaster that ensues and possibly, its originator. My! My! My!

When this happens, we cling to familiar excuses like "I didn't mean to", or "I didn't feel well", or "I had a very hard day." There is also my very favorite, "Nobody is perfect." Additionally, we may blame others. Children often say, "He started it," while adults launch into one another with the guilt-absolving words, "You just don't understand."

However, a good excuse – or even a poor one – does not alter our commitment to God's command to love one another. Jesus gave this

### A World Of Flaws

BY SUZANNE D. WILLIAMS

1. Listen without interrupting. (Pr 18)
2. Speak without accusing. (Jas 1:19)
3. Give without sparing. (Pr 21:26)
4. Pray without ceasing. (Col 1:9)
5. Answer without arguing. (Pr 17:1)
6. Share without pretending. (Eph 4:15)
7. Enjoy without complaint. (Php 2:14)
8. Trust without wavering. (1Co 13:7)
9. Forgive without punishing. (Col 3:13)
10. Promise without forgetting. (Pr 13:12)

We live in a world where people have flaws, where mistakes are made and feelings are hurt. The hardest part of our day is learning to pass them by. We're told to forgive, but I've discovered that it's much easier to say than it is to actually do. It's even harder to walk upright and not step on people's toes to start with.

We give judgment, plucking the toothpick from our neighbor's ... relative's ... spouse's ... eye, all the while adjusting the telephone pole in our own.<sup>1</sup> Worse, **we want people to SEE the telephone pole and embrace it.** It becomes a badge of honor. We're different, special, because of what's happened to us.

*If you enjoy looking at each other's scars,  
you need prayer. - Jesse Duplantis*

(Continued from "The Love Challenge")

decree to His disciples and all the other New Testament writers mention it as well. The apostle Paul writes, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."<sup>2</sup> James teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves saying that this is God's royal law.<sup>3</sup> In the writings of the apostle Peter, we read, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves."<sup>4</sup> The apostle John says, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God."<sup>5</sup>

This command to love one another was my primary passion for many years. After I was filled with the Holy Spirit, Wayne and I disagreed about this great blessing from heaven, so I dedicated myself to the study of love. I did not want my behavior to hinder his reception of this great truth. Certainly, God dwells in every Christian, but He also comes upon us by the power of His Spirit. In time, Wayne wholeheartedly agreed.

During those years, I learned a lot about God's love, but the foundation of my journey was laid by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth. In just five verses, he describes the behavior of every Christian who allows the love of God to dominate his life. I studied every word and read the definition of these words until my notes looked like the freeway in a big city. I also charted each word used by various Bible translators and

Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs. (1Co 13:4-5 GNB)

spent hours reading them over and over again. I still have my original paperwork!

In the beginning, after only two weeks, I collapsed in despair. I had been studying the phrase love "seeketh not her own" from the King James Version of the Bible and I was absolutely sure I could not fulfill God's command. That night, I fell to my knees and told the Lord that I couldn't do it. It was overwhelming. "Love is never selfish! Love does not insist on its own rights or its own way.

Love does not demand, seek, or pursue selfish aims. I can't do it!"

I heard from God that night. In the solitude of my spirit, I heard these words. "You have no choice." Those words were the beginning

of victory because then and there I decided to follow God, to trust Him, to lean on His Word and His Spirit. It was a glorious moment!

Of course, I will never be perfect. But, I will no longer make excuses for myself. I will repent quickly, boldly approaching God's throne of grace and mercy for His help.<sup>6</sup> Then, one more time, I will read the words penned by the apostle Paul and remember the day I turned the corner on this journey. That night, with my face buried in our green-plaid sofa, I said, "I will walk in love." I know with God as my helper, I can!

<sup>1</sup>Jn 13:34 <sup>2</sup>Rm 13:8 <sup>3</sup>Jas 2:8 <sup>4</sup>1Pe 4:8 <sup>5</sup>1Jn 4:7 <sup>6</sup>Heb 4:16

(Continued from "A World Of Flaws")

But the Scripture is clear. We must crucify our flesh and turn our words toward exhortation.<sup>2</sup> Our job as Christ's followers is to build each other up and that begins with our words.

*But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3:3)*

I loved the list at the top of this article. I've read it and re-read it because I can see my flaws sharper every time I do, and as a result, I've

pledged to try harder to do all those things, to think of people I deal with everyday in the light of God's Word and not the self-centered cloud I often wrap around me.

It's increased my desire to be more like Christ, to be willing to lay down my life for those around me, and not just for myself. It's a lofty goal. I know that, and I may not completely accomplish it in my lifetime. But I'll never know if I don't try, and somehow, I think, what little progress I make will make a huge difference in what others think of me.

That will make my efforts worth it.

<sup>1</sup>Mt 7:3 <sup>2</sup>Gal 5:24