

Regret-Free Living

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.
1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

You have probably heard this familiar verse at a wedding or seen it on a picture or plaque in someone's home. I have used it so many times when talking to mothers about how we should love our children that I memorized it without even trying. It is one of those verses that we hear with such frequency that we forget to pay attention to what it says. And how often do we think about actually putting it into practice?

Recently I found myself thinking back over the regrets in my life. I didn't become a Christian until my early 30s, so I have years of very bad behavior... and many regrets. But my biggest regrets are not from those years; they are from recent years – these years when I should know better.

At the root of all those regrets is my lack of ability to love as it is defined in this verse. Jesus says to love one another as He has loved us. "One another" has no qualifier so it means everyone. We are supposed to love everyone as Jesus loved us. We are supposed to be patient with everyone. We should not be rude to anyone. We are to be kind all the time.

That is a tall order, one that we often choose to ignore. But if you look back at the regrets and the troubles you have had in your life, don't you find that many of them stem from not living out this verse?

What about the problems we cause when we don't keep our mouths shut? Or the times we selfishly put our wants before the needs of others? What about when we think we are better or more deserving than someone else of something? Or the hours we have wasted worrying about something? Looking back, I know that if I would have focused on loving others rather than myself, I could have saved many people a myriad of problems and hurts.

But it is not just what we *do*; it is also what we *don't* do. The times we did not do good when we could have. The times we didn't give someone an encouraging word when we could have. When we pass by someone and avoid eye contact because we are uncomfortable? When we just pretend to listen to someone else but our minds are actually far away. The times we give grudgingly instead of generously. I have missed many opportunities to show love to others – opportunities that God put before me to bless me. But, intent on getting the love I thought I deserved, rather than loving others, I missed the blessing.

So what is the key to a regret-free living? We need to memorize this passage and continually roll it through our minds to see if our actions and words in any moment, in any circumstance, with any person, demonstrate our love.

The good news is that we don't have to do it ourselves; Jesus will help us. (The good news is always Jesus!) If we cover our day in prayer each morning and ask the Lord to help us, we will be amazed each and every day at the ways He guides us through this. We won't get it perfect, but if we live a little less for ourselves and a little more for Him each day, we will find our regrets melting away.

Praying for you to have a regret-free, loving day,
Jennifer