

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day. Here are some of the many Valentine's Day statistics that are of interest.

Statistics for Valentine's Day

Cards:

- About 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are exchanged each year. That's the largest seasonal card-sending occasion of the year, next to Christmas.
- 50% of those valentines were purchased within six days of the holiday.
- 85% of all Valentine cards are bought by women.
- More than 50 percent of cards are sold the week of the holiday, with the largest and most elaborate Valentine cards sold 48 hours before February 14.
- Hallmark has over 1330 different cards specifically for Valentine's Day.

Candy:

- More than 36 million boxes of candy will be given away to that special person.
- In 1866, candy manufacturer NECCO made the first "Conversation Hearts" — then called "Motto Hearts." According to NECCO, eight billion of these little candies are sold between January 1 and February 14.
- American men and women agree that the most romantic place to share candy is in front of the fireplace.

Flowers:

- 110 million roses, the majority red, will be sold and delivered within a three-day time period.
- 73% of flowers are bought by men, and only 27% are by women.
- 15% of American women send flowers to themselves on Valentine's Day.

What to give???

- 70 percent of those celebrating the holiday give a card, followed by a telephone call (49 percent), gift (48 percent), special dinner (37 percent), candy (33 percent) restaurant meal (30 percent), and flowers (19 percent).
- On average, men shell out \$130 each on candy, cards, jewelry, flowers and dates. That's more than double what women commit to spending.
- 53% of women said they would dump their boyfriend if they did not get them a Valentine's gift.
- A majority of men (53 percent) admit that they lean on friends and family to find the perfect present for their sweetheart while 11 percent look to co-workers, 10 percent ask the cashier and 7 percent consult the World Wide Web.
- When it comes to present time, women prefer a gift after a nice dinner, while most men prefer gifts first thing in the morning.

Choosing what you are going to acquire for your special someone can be a daunting task. Should I purchase the chocolate, the flowers, the card, the dinner or something else? What are all these gifts trying to communicate? They share one common theme concerning the holiday...LOVE.

With that in mind let us talk about what they really wanted for Valentine's Day. Why not give the gift of LOVE for Valentine's Day? Read the first three words of 1 Corinthians 13:8 "LOVE NEVER FAILS". Whether there be a gift of cards, they will become outdated; if there are flowers, they will be dried up and die; if there is candy, it shall be done away by digestion. BUT LOVE NEVER FAILS. The problem is that we cannot go down to the store and buy a pound of LOVE to give to our special someone, for it simply is not on the market. It is a homemade gift that will require a little planning and time, but is well worth it. The ingredients are located in verses 4-7 just prior and can be arranged in the "promised format".

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*,⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

The Fifteen Promises that Define Love

1) "Love is patient"

- I promise to be patient with you when feeling anxious.
- 1 Peter 2:21-23 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²² WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; ²³ and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;
- Colossians 3:12-13 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;
- Are we willing to be patient with that special person in our lives? The promise of patience would serve all well.

2) "Love is kind"

- I promise to treat you kind when feeling angry.
- Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
- 1 Peter 3:8-9 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

3) "Love is not jealous"

- I promised not to feel threatened by any of your successes.
- Acts 7:9 "The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt."
- Proverbs 6:34 For jealousy enrages a man, And he will not spare in the day of vengeance.
- 1 Corinthians 3:3 "...For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?"
- There are many relationships that suffer damage because of jealousy over a number of issues most of which are completely out of their control. We must never allow this negative quality to pollute our relationships.

4) **“Love does not brag”**

- I promise to not exalt myself over you.
- Galatians 5:26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.
- Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;
- There is a tendency in relationships to show superiority over another. That quality serves as a detriment to the connection with each other. What would happen if we were willing to take the route of humility first and foremost? Would it not turn out better?

5) **“Love is not arrogant”**

- I promise not to compete against you.
- 1 Corinthians 4:6 “...learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.”
- Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.
- Proverbs 16:18 Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.
- In a love relationship there is not room for competition, for we are on the same team. We tend to forget that and allow arrogance and pride to stand in the way. Would not your special someone deeply desire to have this promise of love for the valentine?

6) **“Love does not act unbecomingly”**

- I promise to treat you with respect.
- 1 Peter 3:1-2 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.
- 1 Peter 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.
- Without the elementary principle of respect the relationship will never reach the level that God would want.

7) **“Love does not seek its own”**

- I promise to put your needs above my own.
- Philippians 2:21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.
- 1 Corinthians 10:24 Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor.
- James 3:16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.
- One of the toughest parts of shared lives is the ability to shed selfishness, particularly for the man. Often individuals have a difficult time putting away all those hobbies and habits that take time, funds and quality out of the relationship. What better way to communicate the principle of LOVE than to put others ahead of yourselves?

8) **“Love is not provoked”**

- I promise to extend to you the benefit of the doubt.
- James 1:19-20 *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

- Proverbs 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.
- Ephesians 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,
- One who is under the influence of love finds it difficult to fly off of the handle. It can damage the relationship and must be dealt with. We must be willing to give that special someone in our life the benefit of the doubt or they might not end up being that special someone for long.

9) **“Love does not take into account a wrong suffered”**

- I promise to leave your past mistakes in the past.
- Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
- Romans 15:7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
- There is not a lot a person can do about the past because we live in the present. This is particularly important when it comes to forgiving the person that you love. True love does not keep bringing up the past for it is unproductive to the present. Wouldn't that special person in your life want this for their gift on Valentine's Day?

10) **“Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness”**

- I promise to be understanding when you mess up.
- Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.
- We need to be understanding of that special someone when they error, for we are also often in the same position. When someone you love messes up, it is not a gotcha moment, but a time of reflection and understanding. What better gift to give to that person to say “I love you”?

11) **“Love rejoices in the truth”**

- I promise to always be honest with you.
- Colossians 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—
- Honesty is always the best policy in a functional relationship. Without it the level of trust can never be attained. It does not mean that you always say what you feel or break the confidence of another, but does mean that what you say is true and can be trusted.

12) **“Love bears all things”**

- I promise to share your struggles of life.
- Philippians 4:3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of* the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
- Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.
- Nobody likes to face the struggles of this life alone. No man or woman is an island unto themselves and this includes the people that are closest to us. You are there to help them when they are down and to lift the burden off their shoulders.

13) “Love believes all things”

- I promise to trust you.
- James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.
- This is an incredible leap of faith for the one that is used to doing for him or her own self. There comes a time in every relationship with that special someone when we will have to put a certain level of faith in them. What better time to be reminded of this than today?

14) “Love hopes all things”

- I promise to share my dreams with you.
- Titus 1:2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,
- Hebrews 6:11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,
- Without a common hope in something higher than us, the relationship cannot be what God intends. It begins with the shared hope of eternal life, a good family, a good circle of friends, a common mission and many other steps. Each one is a building block of a relationship with that special one. What better way to say “Be My Valentine” than to say that you are willing to share your dreams and ambitions together?

15) “Love endures all things”

- I promise to stick it out with you for better and for worse.
- Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God. ¹⁷ “Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me.”
- There is much that will challenge our relationships throughout this life. Is it not good to know that your special someone pledges to stick it out to you through thick and thin?

Closing Story: From Christian Chronicle February 2011

TUCSON, ARIZ. - Until a clear, crisp Saturday morning erupted in gunfire outside a Safeway supermarket, few had heard of the Mountain Avenue Church of Christ.

Desert terrain and mountain ranges surround this city of 550,000, about 60 miles north of the Mexican border, where the 120-member congregation meets in a red-brick building shaded by palm trees.

A familiar face only to his friends, relatives and church family, 76-year-old Dorwan Stoddard served Jesus in obscurity — taking charge of maintaining the 50-year-old church building and leading the benevolence ministry with his wife, Mavy.

“He was a hero to his church family,” pulpit minister Mike Nowak said.

But in an instant, he became a hero to millions and propelled the Mountain Avenue church into the national spotlight.

On the morning of Jan. 8, the Christian couple had gone to meet Rep. Gabrielle Giffords at a “Congress on Your Corner” event. When a would-be assassin opened fire as the Stoddards waited in line, Dorwan tried to protect his wife and was hit in the head, witnesses said. “His final act of selflessness was to dive on top of his wife, sacrificing his life for hers,” President Barack Obama told the nation...

It was said of him that his “...last act served as a living demonstration of Ephesians 5:25.” That verse reads: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Mavy Stoddard is recovering from gunshot wounds to her legs.

Despite losing her husband, she maintains her spunk and spiritual strength. “I will survive,” the 75-year-old grieving widow said, seated in a wheelchair as she took the microphone at her husband’s memorial service Jan. 16, eight days after his death. “We will not let that gunman take our hopes.” As the applause drowned out her words, she said: “So hang in there, everybody. Hang onto your loved ones. Keep kissing them and hugging them, because tomorrow they may not be there.”

Closing Point: Make sure you are giving your special someone a Valentine that they really want, a gift of true love as defined by the Bible.