

Love Believes All Things By Wendy Wood



Love believes all things. Other translations say “love always trusts”. This might sound a little crazy. Of course we shouldn’t believe everything we hear. We live in the era of “fake news” and people spouting conspiracy theories and saying whatever it takes to get attention. Proverbs 14:15 even warns us “The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.” We should consider what we hear and evaluate it closely. Proverbs 18:15 says, “An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.” This proverb tells us to acquire knowledge and to seek knowledge. We need to consider whether information is true and right to be wise. In the New Testament we are given the same instruction. First Thessalonians 5:18 says, “Test everything, hold fast what is good.” Surely testing everything is not a gullible way to believe all things. God expects us to engage our minds and consider, ponder, and test what is said and done. We know scripture doesn’t contradict itself so deeper study is needed.

The Greek for believes is *pisteuō* which means to “have confidence in”. So what does Paul mean? “I believe that he meant that if we are loving people, we will not allow suspicion, cynicism, or a judgmental, critical attitude to become a dominant feature in

our relationships. Love's believing all things means that if we are living a life of love, we will put the best possible interpretation on what another person has done or said until we have the facts that prove to the contrary. It means that if we do not have the cold hard facts that prove what the other person has done is evil, malicious, or unbiblical, we will always opt for the most favorable possibility."²³ Jerry bridges brings the definition of judgmentalism home in saying, "Most of us can slip into the sin of judgmentalism from time to time. But there are those among us who practice it continually. These people have what I call a critical spirit. They look and find fault with everyone and everything. Regardless of the topic of conversation - whether it is a person, church, an event, or anything - they end up speaking in a disparaging manner."²⁴ Love chooses to place the best possible light on a situation until there is proof of wrongdoing.

One of the ways we fail to love this way is in making assumptions and judgments of other people's motives. When someone says something that hurts our feelings, we are quick to assume that they meant to be hurtful and therefore are unkind, mean people. When someone does something that we think is inconsiderate of our feelings, we are quick to accuse them of selfishness and intentionally making our life harder. "Love believes all things" tells us that this way of assuming and judging are sinful and definitely not loving.

Consider these scenarios:

1. A woman you just met at a church event walks past you in Costco without saying 'hello'. Do you assume she is avoiding you and doesn't want to be friends? Or do you believe the best and think she just didn't see you?
2. Your husband forgets to stop for milk on the way home even though you called him an hour before he left work to remind him. Do you accuse him of doing it out of selfishness or to make your life more difficult? Or do you believe that he just forgot and that there was no harm intended?
3. A person in your life group is quieter than normal. She says nothing is wrong. Do you spend the evening wondering if she's being honest and stew over what she might be upset about? Or, do you believe her and pray for her?
4. An extended family member forgets your birthday. Do you feel hurt and upset that they don't like you as much as they like the other members of your family? Or do you give them the benefit of the doubt and believe they forgot and quickly move on to how you can love them well?

²³ Maximum Impact by Wayne Mack.

²⁴ Respectable Sins by Jerry Bridges

5. Your 10 year old runs in from outside with dirt all over their shoes and tracks footprints all over the kitchen. Do you get upset and assume your child did this to spite you and force you to clean again so you respond with anger? Or, do you patiently explain the situation and ask them to think carefully about their cleanliness before running inside next time?

These are just a few situations when we tend to jump to negative judgments on the words and actions of others. Maybe your suspicions are rooted back to how you were treated in past (or current) relationships. Someone may do something kind for you and you are quick to assume that they want something in return. When love fails to believe all things, a nice compliment or a gift can't just be an expression of appreciation, the giver must want you to reciprocate and so you can't enjoy the gift. Failing to love as Paul commands us is to live with a suspicion of other people's motives. Failing to love this way means you are the judge of other people's hearts. This is contrary to scripture. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us our hearts are deceitful and we often do not even understand our own hearts, let alone other people's hearts. Psalm 139:23-24 tells us we need God to search our hearts and reveal the right way to go. And Hebrew 4 tells us that it is the Word of God that discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. That's not our job and there's no way we can do it correctly or accurately.

Up to this point we've considered how you need to be loving in how you think about the words and actions of others toward you. "Love believes all things" also applies to when you receive information about other people. A loving person will believe the best of someone who is being gossiped about or slandered about until facts are obtained that would drive us to a different conclusion. Proverbs 18:17 warns us about making snap decisions about others based only on a small amount of information. "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." Love is not gullible. Love doesn't just believe every word that is said. Love is wise in determining if what is said is true and right. It is wise to not assume everything you hear, including negative information about other people, is right. Give the person who is not even there to defend themselves the benefit of the doubt and think well of them. In the face of indisputable facts, our conclusion may change, but don't let judgmentalism be the default setting in your thinking.

Application:

1. What stood out to you about "love believes all things"?

2. On a scale of 1 - 10, how big a problem is judgmentalism or a critical spirit for you? Are you quick to assume bad motives or to believe the worst (10) or are you charitable and assume the best (1)? why?
3. Write out Philippians 4:8. Next to each word that should describe our thinking, write a definition of what it means. Then, write something about God that would fit each category. How can this help you when tempted to think critically of others?