

“I absolutely love this book! It is definitely chicken soup for your soul. I couldn’t stop turning the pages. It is part memoir, part adventure story, and part personal and spiritual development guide. Do yourself a really big favor and read this book.”

—Jack Canfield, coauthor of the #1 *New York Times* best-selling *Chicken Soup for the Soul*® series

“Kim Sorrelle’s meditation on what it means to truly live out biblical love frequently takes her to one of the most challenging countries on earth in which to apply it, her mission field of Haiti. Those concerned about that country’s ongoing humanitarian crisis will find here vivid stories of people putting love to work on the grittiest ground, suffused with gentle humor, steely resolve, and the author’s undeniable courage.”

—Charles Honey, editor-in-chief and writer at School News Network and religion editor and columnist, *The Grand Rapids Press/MLive*

“Life-changing for the author translated to life-changing for me. So insightful, powerful, and funny. The perfect blend of inspiration and entertainment. I couldn’t put it down.”

—Dennis Bell, former NBA player with the New York Knicks

“*Love Is* removes the blinders from your eyes and fills your heart with a new sense of compassion and possibility for yourself and for others. A refreshingly honest and inspiring book.”

—Steve Harrison, Publisher at *Radio-TV Interview Report*

“Leaning on humor and heartache and grace, Kim Sorrelle illuminates Scripture in ways that help us to know love in vibrant new ways—most significantly as a living, breathing being. She reminds us of the power in being unconditionally open, vulnerable, and human. Read it with a highlighter in one hand and tissue in the other.”

—Tom Rademacher, longtime columnist for *The Grand Rapids Press*

“This life-changing, life-challenging book is both funny and inspirational. It’s a good read for anyone in business. Having great relationships with staff, coworkers, customers, and vendors takes the kind of love that Kim writes about.”

—Dr. Ivan Misner, Founder of Business Network International and  
*New York Times* best-selling author

“We’ve all heard the ‘Love Chapter’ in 1 Corinthians 13 many times, but never like this. I can’t remember the last time I was so sucked in to storytelling in a nonfiction book. Kim Sorrelle invites her readers around the campfires of Haiti (where she would sleep in abject fear under a crude picnic table), to a crocodile-filled lake in Hispaniola, and the presidential palace of Venezuela. In her openhearted, relatable, and often hilarious way, Kim winsomely teaches us to ‘live love’ in a whole new way, with a whole new mindset.

—Lorilee Craker, author of fifteen books, including the *New York Times* best seller *Through the Storm* with Lynne Spears, *Money Secrets of the Amish*, and *Anne of Green Gables, My Daughter and Me*

“In a tightly composed structure, Kim Sorrelle presents the reader with fourteen attributes of love based on St. Paul’s famous description in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. Sorrelle’s anecdotes are amazing revelations of her character, and the reader cannot help but admire her pluck and courage, as well as her dedication to work in Haiti.”

—The Rev. Dr. Karin Orr, Chaplain,  
Clark Retirement Community

“Kim Sorrelle has written a charming and challenging, engaging and energizing book that takes us back to the most basic element of being human: love. Her journey becomes all of our journeys, as she teaches us what living out love looks like every minute of every day. Thank you, Kim!”

—Ann Byle, freelance writer for *Publisher’s Weekly*

# LOVE IS

A Yearlong Experiment of Living Out  
**1 Corinthians 13 Love**

Kim Sorrelle



**KREGEL**  
PUBLICATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

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# WHY LOVE?

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, I read an article about a man who committed to living a year like Jesus. Wow. How transformational! To have that peace and joy—or is it tough and gritty? Either way, all ways, life would never be the same.

I thought about how I would brave that task. How would I know that I was really living like Jesus?

Then the light bulb blazed: God *is* love. So to live like Jesus would be living love. But what is love? And how would I live that while crossing cultural obstacles with one foot on US soil and the other in places like Haiti, where love is both abundant and seemingly nonexistent, challenging and effortless simultaneously?

I know some things about love. It is universal, timeless, and ageless. It is a feeling, a choice, a given. It is all-encompassing, enduring, and everlasting. Love conquers all, never fails, and keeps us together. But it hurts, gets lost, and takes time.

There are love bugs, love seats, and love boats. There are love notes, love songs, and lovebirds.

Love is a dare, a game, a language. You can be lovesick, loveless, and lovely.

You can fall in love, be addicted to love, do anything in the name of love, play the game of love, use the power of love.

You can't hurry it or buy it and you don't know if it will be there tomorrow. Yet love is all you need.

There's even a Love Chapter of the Bible.

We've heard the Love Chapter (1 Cor. 13:4–8) read and expounded upon many times (mostly at weddings). It's one of the most memorized, admired, and well-known passages in all of Scripture, even by non-church folk. In fact, we've heard this famous passage so often our eyes kind of glaze over. "Love is patient, love is kind, does not env . . ." *Yeah, yeah. We know how this goes.*

But what is love, really?

John says that God is love. Bob the Tomato of VeggieTales® says God is bigger than the boogie man, Godzilla, and the monsters on TV. So the love that is God must be way bigger than my love of black licorice and movie theater popcorn.

Jesus named the number one law, of all of the laws—and there were tons. Leviticus, the third book of the Torah and the Old Testament, lists most of the 613 rules of conduct God gave to Israel. Jesus could have picked any one of them. Murder is pretty heavy. Stealing isn't exactly harmless. Adultery can destroy families in a hurry. Lying about someone could get you and them into a heap of trouble. But with no hesitation, he picked the one that sat right in between "don't carry a grudge or seek revenge" and "don't mate two different kinds of animals." Jesus basically said, "That's an easy one. Love God and love people" (see Lev. 19:18). Just like that. There is no exception clause, no fine print, no room for interpretation. Love people, all of them, every single one.

Even deeper, Paul said that you can't go wrong if you love people because love is the fulfilling of the law. An order gets picked out of the warehouse, loaded, delivered, fulfilled. "Fulfilled" is complete, buttoned-up, stick a fork in it, done. All of it, all 613 laws, if you love

(as in, the love that God is), you don't break laws. So WWJD (what would Jesus do) is interchangeable with WWLD (what would love do).

If you understand love and live love, your life will change. If that love gets a little contagious, the whole world could be a better place.

I am going to figure out love one word at a time, taking 1 Corinthians 13 to heart and feet. Live it, learn it, love it. It is quite a list, a list that I think I already know, but somehow I think I have a lot to learn.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. (1 Cor. 13:4–8)



# LOVE IS PATIENT

LOVE IS EVERYWHERE, FROM SITCOMS to reality shows, T-shirts to best sellers. Heart-shaped this and kiss, kiss that. Raymond gets it from everybody, Patty wants to find it for her millionaires, and the new Bachelor is trying to uncover it somewhere in a hot tub full of bikinis.

Love: “little word, little white bird,” says Carl Sandburg. Love, “little word, little pain in the neck,” says me. I thought living love as outlined in 1 Corinthians 13 would be simple: just walk in love, speak in love, and act in love. But for such a small word, love is hard to do. It’s also multilayered. Take patience, for example, love’s first requirement.

In the last couple of days, I have yelled at a space-hogging car and shown my frustration with the Chatty Cathy cashier at the grocery store. *All I wanted to do was go home and eat, dagnabit!* I was short when a staff meeting veered from my personal agenda. Then the word hit me, and love slapped me across the face: Patience—love’s first definition in the passage.

*Patience: 1. the quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like. 2. an ability or willingness to suppress restlessness*

*or annoyance when confronted with delay: to have patience with a slow learner. 3. quiet, steady perseverance; even-tempered care; diligence: to work with patience.*

Is impatience genetic? If it is, I am in trouble. One time, my spitfire, type A, go-to-work-with-the-flu father told me that he “prided himself on his patience.” Huh? Really? I loved my dad to pieces, and he had many excellent qualities, but patience was not one of them. He taught me if you want a job done right, just do it yourself; poky people should not be allowed in the fast lane; and eleven items at the ten-items-and-under checkout is unacceptable.

*Hurry! Get it done. Do it faster. Slow is useless. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. No whining, you’re fine.*

So, between my possible genetic predisposition and my somewhat harried, hurried personality, it would not come naturally if patience came. God is patient. I am not. But I can’t just skip over love’s first definition, can I? My goal for this month is to walk, speak, act, and be patient. I will even pray for patience, which scares me to death because God will likely answer that prayer. *How* he will answer it scares me. Still, here goes:

*Oh, Lord, help me acquire patience. Help me to learn and act in patient love. And please be gentle.*

## Welcome to Haiti

Flying over Haiti is like flying over Jurassic Park. You see the lush mountains slowly rolling out into gorgeous, green plains and finally the sandy fringe of the turquoise Caribbean, but you don’t see the carnivorous monsters waiting to devour whoever dares to land.

On my first visit to Haiti in 2000, I vowed never to return. The thick poverty was so suffocating that it made the fumes from an oil-guzzling diesel truck seem like pure oxygen. But Haiti had my number and my heart. People say it’s an addictive country to visit: once in Haiti, there’s something about the Haitians, the history, and even the air that can get in your blood and draw you back time and again. Within six months of returning home, I was tasting the perpetually

dusty air again. Today, the poverty is thicker, the oxygen is thinner, and so are the people.

After seeing so much need in Haiti, my spitfire dad and I started a nonprofit organization called Rays of Hope International. First under the umbrella of the organization that I was directing, Careforce International, then independently when a diagnosis required my resignation.

Pancreatic cancer gifted my husband an early ticket to heaven in March of 2009. Breast cancer gifted me a new bustline the very same year. By late December, having finished all surgeries, treatments, and *Grey's Anatomy* episodes, it was time to get off the couch and get back to work.

As fate would have it, Rays of Hope needed a bookkeeper, making for an easy transition from potato to productive. But what began as part-time bean counting morphed into a twelve-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week marathon when an earthquake shook Haiti like a paint mixer. Within a couple of weeks, my Keds landed on what used to be solid ground in Port au Prince.

Even losing my husband did not diminish my passion for Haiti and Haitians. Somehow, taking a cannonball to the heart galvanized the steely part of me that wanted purpose in my life. Widowhood at forty-seven brought me to my knees, but love for the wrecked little nation lifted me back up in the bluest of waters. But even on my first visit, when I fought falling in love with Haiti, I knew my love would require patience such as I had never needed before.



*Patient love. Love is patient.* Long-suffering. Unwearied. Unflappable. But what if a situation makes you prickly with irritation like a hedgehog? Or what if the spiky circumstances don't change for a really long time, longer than you think you can handle? And how can someone practice patience in a country where horns are continually honking, dogs are forever barking, and a five-mile drive can take an hour?

My beloved Haiti has stretched my patience over and over, but maybe never so much as during January's Mixed-Up Shipping Container Incident.

Rays of Hope fills and ships 40-foot containers full of resources into a country in drastic need. Medical supplies take up the majority of the 2,250 cubic feet of space. School supplies, dental tools, and mattresses for orphanages usually take up the rest. Everything we ship goes to organizations that are working to show compassion and love to others. The container gets loaded on a 40-foot-long chassis that is then pulled by a semitruck to Detroit. There the container rides on the rails to New Jersey, where a crane takes it off the flatcar and loads it onto a massive ship with lots and lots of other containers full of lots and lots of stuff. The ship sets sail and eventually pulls into the port in Port au Prince, where another crane picks it up and sets it down on Haitian ground.

Shipping is the easy part. Getting the container released by the Haitian government? Now that requires unflappability the likes of which most humans are not naturally blessed. Over and over, my patience has been tested, fried, and fricasseed in the fires of Haitian Red Tape (capitalization required, trust me). But this incident was award-winning ("and the Oscar for Patience goes to . . .").

The plan was that Patrick, our Haitian manager, would pick me up at 9:30 a.m. We would then make our way to the port, get the container, and have it hauled to our warehouse, where we should arrive about 11 a.m. We planned to finish unloading the cargo by 3 p.m. and then head up to Borel, arriving shortly before sunset at 6 p.m., meet up with friends and work partners, and crash for the night, so we could start a project there bright and early the next morning.

The reality was different from those best-laid plans. I woke up in the wee, dark hours to the tormented sounds of Jude, one of the young boys at Notre Maison Orphanage, my home away from home in Port au Prince. "Aaaaa!" he cried out. Notre Maison is a home for children with disabilities, and it also has a few beds for visitors.

"Aaaaaa . . ." Three seconds long, plus a one-second pause.

“Aaaaa . . .”

Poor little guy. I felt for him, but I decided there was no sleeping through Jude’s sounds in the dark.

I gave up and prepared my breakfast of coffee, watermelon, and supremely tart oranges. Miraculously, the power was on, so I grabbed my laptop to return emails for the next couple of hours.

By 9:17, I had freshened up, applied a little makeup, stuck some bobby pins in my hair, and filled my backpack. Ten minutes later, the power went “poof,” to no one’s surprise, so I joined my friend Shirley on the roof of the orphanage to wait for Patrick.

Shirley had already been in Haiti for ten days and planned to stay and serve for three months. We swapped stories and talked about faith, love, and our beloved Haiti. We talked about the power—would it come back on within the next hour, day, or week?

Patrick arrived a little after 11 a.m.

“Good mornin’!” He was all smiles. “The container is all set. The broker is getting it right now so we can go straight to the warehouse.”

“Great!” I was thrilled. “Let’s go.”

I turned to help Shirley figure out an app on her iPhone, and when I swiveled around again, Patrick was gone.

“Patrick!” I bellowed his name to the surrounding area, my heart sinking just a little. Something in me knew he was not waiting in the car or using the bathroom.

“He left to go get minutes,” I heard from a disembodied voice on street level. My heart dropped a few more inches.

Minutes, as in mobile phone minutes, resemble lottery scratch-off tickets, and, like phone chargers, cold drinks, and plantain chips, are available on most street corners. You trade the street vendor 100 gourdes for a card he retrieves from his red apron, scratch off the entry code with a coin, and punch the code into your cell phone. Voila! You can make calls.

I had no idea why Patrick left to get minutes at that time. In the twenty miles between Notre Maison and the warehouse, there would be a sea of red aprons full of scratch-off cards and mobile minutes. I

sighed, but on the scale of one to ten, with rasping, guttural sighing being a ten and the slightest exhale being a one, I was only at about a four. However, the day was young. Haiti had taught me to be reasonably plucky in the face of irritating circumstances, at least those that occur before noon. But we were already hours behind schedule.

Patrick returned just before noon, and we jumped in the car to head out for the day. (Haiti time: 9:30 a.m., 11:51 a.m. = What's the difference?) *Love is patient. Patience is love.*

"Hey Patrick, did you call everyone on the distribution list to meet us at the warehouse?"

"Yeah, Kim, I did all that already."

I had an instinct. "OK, so did you get ahold of everyone?"

"Well, not everyone."

I skimmed the distribution list to see the names of those anxiously waiting for the goods that left our dock in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in April, nine months beforehand. They would be happy that customs finally released the container.

It didn't always take this long.

It usually didn't take this long.

It was painful that it had taken this long, but now—praise God—the container was on its way to the warehouse, cleared by customs and ready to be unloaded.

I read off names and phone numbers, and Patrick called again those among the "everyone" yet to be notified. After several calls, everyone knew.

At nearly 1 p.m., I noticed that we were on Delmas 33, headed west toward The Neighborhood instead of east toward our warehouse.

The Neighborhood is an unexpected patch of land turned into a tent city surrounded by small cement block buildings and a power plant. A twelve-foot opening serves as the entry point from the main road. On January 12, 2010, the earthquake in Haiti destroyed one-third of the houses in Port au Prince. The next day, tent cities mushroomed across the capital. One of the tents in The Neighborhood protected Patrick and his beloved, Gardine, from the elements, and gave them a flimsy

place to belong though their foundations had been shaken. Patrick and Gardine eventually found a rental house and moved a few blocks away, but the bonds in the neighborhood remained strong.

Suffering such a tragedy together created a strong relationship among the neighbors, and they became as close as family. Family watches out for each other, so Patrick tries to extend work opportunities whenever possible. We hire ten day-workers to unload all 38,000 pounds of cargo by hand. Each worker receives a US twenty-dollar bill, as many bags of water as needed to stay hydrated in the hot sun, and a Styrofoam container full of rice, beans, and chicken purchased from a street vendor.

“Do you have to pick up some guys?” The guys usually find their own transportation to work.

“Yeah, the guys have these big scissors to cut off the seal and they can’t just go around with ’em,” Patrick said as if this was a regular occurrence.

The “big scissors” turned out to be the biggest set of box cutters I have ever seen, easily as tall as my four-year-old granddaughter. “Can’t just go around with ’em” indeed! The police would surely mistake the giant box cutter–toting workers for car thieves or kidnappers.

Two workers got into the car with the big scissors, and by 1:30 p.m., we finally arrived at the warehouse, two and a half hours after our expected time. I drew a deep breath and made myself smile. *Well, we’re here, so let’s get this show on the road.* Miss Plucky tries to look on the bright side! My stomach grumbled. *Must have protein in the morning.* I made a mental note. Citrus and coffee were not cutting it, and I felt my nerves getting tetchy.

*Love is patient. Patience is love. Jesus, help me show love. Help me be patient.*

A tree service operation was working in the way of our container. And by “tree service operation,” I mean a large truck with a hook on a boom and a man with a machete. It took a while to convince machete man to move his vehicle, but by 2:15 p.m., the container was in its place and ready to be unloaded. Patrick took the massive scissors, cut the seal, and opened the container doors.

## Unloading Patience

I rejoiced as the first boxes came off the container. Finally! I had tried to be easygoing about the delays, and I was so happy that we still had three and a half hours before sunset. We could do this! This patience thing was paying off. I could see that the reward of living patient love was things going smoothly! I could have hugged all ten day-workers, Patrick, and the machete man.

I rejoiced too soon. A hiccup revealed itself almost immediately. Practicing patience, I wanted to let Patrick be in charge. This was his job, after all. He had done this umpteen times before. But I noticed the labels on the boxes said things like “St. Vincent de Paul,” “Redeemer Church,” and “Sisters of Charity,” organizations I distinctly remembered not calling out to Patrick in the car. I looked at the container number, TGHU-5471 . . . Wait! Mediterranean Shipping Company had shipped the April container; hence the container number should start with MSC, not TGHU.

This was the wrong container. We had the wrong distribution list. We had called the wrong people to pick up their supplies. The wrong people were at that very minute on their way to do just that. It was Patrick’s job to know which container we were unloading.

So many thoughts ricocheted through my melting head.

The containers are as big as train cars, forty feet long, eight and a half feet high, and eight feet wide. The laborious process of unloading the container is made more strenuous by lugging everything, box by box, up an incline to the chapel-turned-warehouse. However, when we call people who run the organizations on the list, many of them come to receive their boxes as they are coming off the container.

Yet the wrong people were coming for their stuff.

My lips straightened and my jaw tightened. *Patience, Kim, patience*, whispered the voice in my head. I took a deep breath as I noticed my fingers drumming on the container’s side—aggravation bristled as I focused on trying not to fire or throttle my employee. If there was a cartoon bubble over my head, you could have roasted marshmallows in the flames.



“Could this be the June container, not the April container?” Patrick said, innocent as a lamb. *What! Really! Lord, I know that I am praying for patience, but really?* I could have flown into Haiti tomorrow and avoided this challenge. The container could have been released by customs last week before I arrived. Yet here we stand—me on the brink of exploding, and Patrick nonchalant.

“We have to call everybody on both lists,” I said, as nicely as possible through gritted teeth. *Jesus, help me. Please!* My tank of human patience was running on fumes, and I needed a filling of divine strength. I knew this fiasco reflected poorly on Rays of Hope, and on me too. Many of the folks we called on the wrong list would have rented trucks, hired day workers, and would start arriving at any minute. They will be frustrated, even aggravated, by this mix-up.

I breathed in and out. My stomach rumbled, reminding me that I hadn’t eaten in hours. I could buy some street food, but I pictured the hanging raw chicken, buzzing with flies, and decided a foodborne illness wouldn’t improve my patience. The right distribution list had to be found, and fast, so that we could call the correct recipients of this shipment.

“Where’s Patrick?” I asked, suddenly noticing he’d vanished again. I felt a little bit faint.

“Patrick *pa la*,” one of the guys said in Creole. (Haitian Creole is the language of 90–95% of Haitians. The language developed when African slaves decided to revolt against their French owners and needed to communicate with each other without being understood by the slave owners. It is a mix of French, Spanish, and a couple of West African languages.)

I tried a couple words to find out where he was. “*Pa la?* Not here?”

“*Toilette?*” No.

“*Dlo?*” Did he go to get water? No.

I slumped against the container and prayed some more.

After about half an hour, Patrick reappeared, with a printout of the distribution list.

He did it! I knew he would! I exhaled a bit. *Patient love.*

I tried to infuse my voice with goodwill and tolerance as I recommended that Patrick first call those from the wrong list. Some of them had already shown up and left, but perhaps if we acted fast, we could save a trip for others.

“That’s what I’m doin’,” he softly muttered. “That’s what I’m doin’.”

*Don’t micromanage. Let Patrick do it. Stop talking.*

Apparently, Patrick was getting as frustrated with me as I was with him. I realized that my sighs were louder than I thought and my face was not smiling but showing exasperation.

It was 4:49 p.m. and we were burning daylight. I began to hustle a bit more in my efforts to aid the unloading process.

“My phone’s losin’ charge,” Patrick said, as he walked away from the container and toward the car. “I’m gonna charge it up.”

“How are the phone calls going?” *Breathe. Patience.*

“Well, the list I have is not the right distribution list.”

What?! “So, do you have the right distribution list?” *The one sent to you seven months ago when the container left Rays of Hope’s dock. The one that has been sent to you repeatedly since?* Now we need a third list? There surely wasn’t enough patience in the world to keep me from screaming, but by some miracle, I stifled my anger.

“I am going to go print it.” *Patience. Love is patient.* Patrick was still learning. I was still learning. We were all trying to do it the right way.

I grunted as I lugged boxes off the container and snagged my skirt on an old chair inexplicably sitting in the way. When Patrick returned in half an hour, we were still unloading.

“You broke the chair?” Patrick asked.

“It was me or the chair,” I said. “I won.”

The good news was that no one else from the wrong list turned up. The bad news was, just forty minutes remained before total darkness. Patrick instructed the guys to start putting everything into the warehouse. Thirty-eight thousand pounds of boxes, tubs, pails, and crates spread over the pavement now had to be picked up again, carried up the incline, and put into the warehouse.

By 6 p.m., the gentle hum and loud roar of generators started to fill

the air. It was as black as tar out there, and we were still moving boxes and crates. I remembered the flashlight app on my phone. Then we could move boxes by a little tiny light instead of no light at all.

“Kim! Come here!” I heard Patrick call to me out of the inky sky. My phone read 6:20 p.m.

“Can’t you come here?” My voice was no longer infused with tolerance, but with something sour.

“I’m looking at somethin’,” he called back. *Oh yes, that explains it. Of course, I need to go there. Patience!*

I daydreamed about throttling him with my bare hands and stepped gingerly through the dark to the guesthouse one hundred feet away. The lights from the generator assaulted my eyes as I beheld Patrick, smiling, holding a plate full of chicken, rice and beans, and fruit. On his last vanishing act, he had arranged for a meal for me. I smiled back at him, sincerely this time, and slid gratefully into a chair to eat.

An hour later, Patrick appeared and told me he finished all of the paperwork. When we pulled out of the compound into the noisy, congested, smoky street, I felt euphoric. Something in me had feared we would never untangle ourselves from the container mix-up, and I’d have to live out my days on the dock, suppressing wrath.

Things looked brighter now, having been fed, with the container unloaded into the warehouse, and leaving—especially leaving.

“Kim, I’m starving. We should get something to eat, then drive to Borel.”

“Borel? But Borel is three hours away! We can’t possibly still be going to Borel.”

“That was the plan! Oh, and I have someone picking up stuff from the warehouse at 7 a.m.,” he said, swerving to avoid a crater in the road. “We’ll have to leave Borel by 4 a.m.”

I know I asked for it, but even patience has its limits. I insisted that the three-hour drive just to sleep a few hours and hit the road again wasn’t worth it. So, we drove back to Notre Maison, where Patrick ate and we made a plan for the next day.

It was 11 p.m. when I showered off layers of sweat and grime. As the

ice-cold water dribbled on my shoulders, I wondered why I thought it was a good idea to pray for patience. As it turned out, patience is a much more powerful word than I thought. I dried off with a scratchy rag of a towel and climbed into bed.

“Help me, Jesus. Thank you for saving me today, from myself, from doing something I’d regret. Help me understand patience better. Help me understand love.” Tomorrow was another day, and another chance to live love.

As I drifted off, scenes from the hard hours that had passed flitted through my mind and I had a revelation. Patrick knew patient love; he lived it all day long. He had never been flustered, had never yelled or snapped. Patrick was present, aware, unwavering. I was so consumed in this quest to discover the meaning of patient love, I didn’t see it demonstrated through my self-indulgent haze. Now that the fog had lifted, it became so clear. Patrick lived such patient love. It was part of his being, woven in the fabric of his soul. My naked soul would have to deliberately work on living love that is patient. Maybe if I had recognized this sooner, I would have learned the meaning of patient love while there was still daylight. I had one last conscious thought: *Patience, I desire you . . . sort of.*

### People Aren’t Interruptions

Haiti is a gifted professor. Haitian culture schools my patience, or at least my previous understanding of patience. Before this year of living love, I thought that waiting without complaining was patience, that not expecting everyone to be in an American hurry was *extra* patience. And I thought not caving in to frustration during a traffic jam in a city of nearly two million people—with infrastructure for only forty thousand people—was top-drawer, gold-medal, long-suffering patience. But I am pretty sure I had it wrong.

That day with Patrick at the warehouse revealed something to me: the essence of patience is being present in the moment. I had been entirely *absent* from the moment, racing ahead in my mind, worried about the consequences of Patrick’s mistakes. Being in the moment is

*not* thinking ahead about that long to-do list or the mass of emails that need to be returned. It means being more concerned with showing love to a slow checkout clerk at the grocery store than getting home after a grueling day. It means living love in the minute, with a human being, not an obstacle to my plans.

Patient love realizes that people are more important than agendas. Everything else will wait, can wait. Had I practiced being in the moment with Patrick, I would have been calmer, more accepting, less put out, less perturbed.

By being present in the moment, body and soul, mind and spirit, the moment takes on a new reality. A fullness. A wholeness. Senses heighten, minds open, and hearts engage.

Mother to child.

Husband to wife.

Friend to friend.

Stranger to stranger.

Love is present in the moment while patient love embraces and encircles the moment. It listens, sees, feels, and, because of that, it waits. Patient love waits, knowing that this is the most important moment of your life. What is in the past stays there. What is ahead isn't here yet. Nothing else matters besides right here, right now.

In understanding love that is patient, I also understand that, first, it is not natural for me. Second, it is going to take a lot of work and a whole lot of focus to just be in the moment and not be distracted by the thousands of interruptions vying for my attention. This love is not going to be a one-day, follow the directions and put the Ikea coffee table together kind of learning. It will be more like learning how to surf in crazy high waves with great white sharks waiting for their dinner to take a nosedive. Ignoring the squirrel, the shiny object, and the vibrating cell phone takes some time.

It all sounds right, but what is the reality? What does practicing patient love look like to a type A raised by a type A+? It looks like focusing on focusing, intentionally putting on blinders, tuning out all other sounds, having a gold medal-worthy stare-down contest with the

moment. Think of that tracking device that we all carry around in our pockets and purses—you know, the one that sounds like wind chimes, an alien spacecraft, or the first bar of a favorite song? The one that gets all of our attention? We can be midsentence and if that thing makes a sound, the whole world stops while our eyes immediately move to look at the screen. Maybe patient love means finding the off button.

*Lord Jesus, I think of all of the times that I have not shown patient love, nodding my head as if I was listening while my mind was already on the next task. Lord, help me to live in the moment. Help me to have patient love. I desire patience, patience that waits, patient love—and this time, I really mean it.*