



WOW: Word Of the Week

Stego

May 17, 2023

Mother's Day has come and gone for another year. What one word describes mothers? One possible answer is "love." If your answer is "love," 1 Corinthians 13 may come to mind.

1 Corinthians 13 is pretty easy, understandable. After various descriptive phrases, the conclusion is memorable: love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. We sing a song, *The Greatest Love*, that echos those words. Four different descriptions. Belief, hope, endurance—easily understood, familiar Bible words.

Have you considered? What is the difference between love bears and love endures? What does it mean that love bears all things? When a loving mother bears all things, what does she do?

The original Greek word, stego, is this week's WOW. The word occurs only four times in the New Testament. Besides 1 Cor. 13:7, Paul in 1 Cor. 9:12 says, "we bear/endure/tolerate/put up with anything so the gospel will not be hindered." That's our word. In 1 Thess. 3:1,5, Paul explains why he sent Timothy to Thessalonica – we could not longer endure, we could not tolerate not knowing.

Love bears all things. What comes to your mind? An informal survey shows that many people think of being weighed down, carrying a weight, cargo, or load. Forbear is a better translation in some contexts. The basic meaning is this: love tolerates, suffers, endures, puts up with.

The root of the word means to put a roof over, to cover. To cover with silence give the meaning of patiently enduring, forbearing. From the root, three common meanings come.

First, to cover, to protect or keep by covering, to preserve

Second, to cover with silence, thus to keep secret, to overlook errors and faults of others

Third, a covering that keeps away a threat, to bear up against, hold out, endure, bear, forbear.

A related noun, stegē, appears three times in the New Testament. In Matt. 8:8 and Luke 7:6, a centurion tells Jesus, "I am not worthy for you to come under my roof." In Mark 2:4, the friends of the paralytic literally unroof the roof. This noun is strengthened from a primary word, tegos, that means to thatch, thus to roof.

Back to love. One more look over our shoulder at Mother's Day. My question repeated. When a loving mother bears all things, what does she do? She provides a protective atmosphere, she overlooks errors and faults, she shields from threats and evil.

What do Christians who love one another do? They forbear, tolerate, endure, put up with. The fellowship of loving believers provides protection, forgiveness, and shielding from the evil around us.

Love bears all things. The next time you hear or sing these words, I hope they will be richer for you. Perhaps you will remember "stego," perhaps not. More important is that you remember that love protects, forgives, and combats threats and evil. Most important is that our love bears all things—we protect, forgive, and combat evil. When that happens, we experience what it means that "love bears all things."