



Keys to a Lasting Marriage: Lesson Three

OBJECTIVES

After today's session participants will:

- See that love and marriage is all about COMMITMENT.
- After reviewing Christ's commitment to them, they will recommit to being
 - Communicative
 - Considerate
 - Christ-like.



Lesson Three

OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Many Christians have “go to” passages—Bible truths they turn to in times of need. Look at the following passages and identify why they might be meaningful to so many people.

Passage	Why is it meaningful?
Matthew 28:20 - Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.	<i>Reminds us that Jesus is always with us, even if others neglect us and forget about us.</i>
Psalms 23:1 - The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.	<i>As God’s child, we lack NOTHING! He promises to care for us physically and spiritually.</i>
Isaiah 43:1 - This is what the LORD says— “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”	<i>God’s children have the wonderful assurance that they have been called by the Lord—we belong to him.</i>
Do you have any “go to” passages that are particularly meaningful to you? If so, list one or two of them below. <i>(You don’t need to know the reference or have exact wording.)</i>	
<i>Give the participants 30-40 seconds to jot down a few thoughts. If you think you can spare the time (don’t get bogged down on this), allow participants a chance to share a handful of them with the group. Then move on and proceed to the slides 2-6, which highlight important truths God shares in Scripture—reminding us that we are loved, forgiven, headed for heaven.</i>	

I need to hear these reminders again and again. I need to be reminded of how faithful and committed God is to me. It’s also very important that I realize and appreciate these passages and promises are for my spouse too. Here’s a pro tip: My perspective changes when I realize how special and valuable my spouse is to the Lord.

In Lesson 1 we identified that there was “something more” than just tingles and feelings in a marriage. That “something more” is the agape love that the Lord shares with us and models for us. The key principle we looked at in Lesson 2 was SERVICE—putting others, especially our spouse, ahead of ourselves. Today we’ll look at another key part of agape love—COMMITMENT.

Marriage is a COMMITMENT to be...

- **Communicative**
- **Considerate**
- **Christ-like**

Before we dig into these three areas of commitment, here's a key reminder...

Colossians 3:12 – Therefore, as God's *chosen people, holy and dearly loved*, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the *new creation* has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Take special note of how the apostle Paul addresses God's believers (italicized words above). Answer either (or both) of the questions below:

For what reasons is this valuable for us to hear?

God's chosen people. Holy. Dearly loved. New creation. Remember who you are and how blessed you are! Paul is speaking to us as believers. We are loved by God. We've seen the love of Christ. We are holy, not by righteous things we have done, but covered in the righteousness of Christ.

In what ways does this help us as we consider our commitment to our spouses?

Because of what Christ has done for us and in us, we are uniquely equipped to reflect Christ's love to our spouses. What follows are some practical ways of doing that.

Committed to Communicate (Slide 7)

Take two minutes and scan through the verse below. Identify at least four biblical keys to healthy communication.

Ephesians 4:29 – Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Ephesians 4:25-27 – “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Ephesians 4:15 – [Speak] the truth in love.

Colossians 3:12-14 – Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Allow the participants to come up with their four ways. It likely will look like this:

Use your words to build up and benefit. Use words to share what's on your mind—don't go to bed angry. Use words that are loving and truthful. Use words to apologize and forgive. On this last point—what a blessing for husbands and wives to be able to share words of forgiveness. That's what we talked about in the first session—that marriage is a safe environment where we can share the love of Christ. (Show Slides 8 and 9). The apostle John has a better approach than John Wayne.

Consider this.... (Keys to Communication)

(Slide 10)

Words can build up _____ or tear down _____.

(Slide 11) If your child brings home this report card, which subject are you likely to focus on? Our words can do the same. Our spouses will catch and focus on the criticism more acutely than the compliment. Studies have shown—it takes FIVE positive encounters to counterbalance the effects of one negative encounter. That's true of our words. Another thought: Has a total stranger ever given you a compliment? A total stranger saying something nice about your new hair style or fashion sense or the way you interacted with your child at a restaurant—that can make your day! Imagine how positive words from your spouse can give you a boost.

(Slide 12)

Words inform/educate _____.

(Slide 13) Give reasons why the statement is false: After being married for 19 years, I know exactly what my spouse needs and wants. Take 30 seconds to think about it and to develop some answers. Why it's false: Remember, we are always changing—opinions, wants, needs, tastes—we change. In fact, the longer we are married, the more crucial it is to communicate clearly so our spouses don't have to guess, assume, or reach conclusions that are inaccurate.

(Slide 14)

Words are only part _____ of our communication.

Ask the participants: What other ways do we communicate, if not by words? *Answer:* tone, body language, gestures, facial expressions. Think of how a roll of the eyes or a disappointing shake of the head can really put barbs into a message that otherwise verbally would have been very neutral. Just be aware of it, watch for it in yourself, and seek to have the words and all the nonverbals be adorned with love.

(Slide 15)

My greater goal is to better understand _____ my spouse rather than to be understood _____.

Imagine how arguments and debates can take on a totally different tone when my #1 goal is to better understand my spouse. My goal isn't to make sure I am being heard OR to make sure I win the argument OR make sure I get the last word—those are examples of ME FIRST. My YOU FIRST goal is to better understand.

(Slide 16)

I can improve my communication by becoming a better listener _____.

We all know someone (maybe at times we are that someone) who isn't really listening to us; rather they are nodding along just waiting for a break in the conversation so they can speak. That's called MONOLOGUE communication. Our goal is to have DIALOGUE communication with our spouses. And that means listening. Good listening is a great way to exhibit YOU FIRST love.

If you have time, you might show "It's Not about the Nail" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHR0g>) for a light-hearted example of listening.

If you do use the video, be certain to point out the broad stroke stereotype that is depicted—that men are quick to jump to solutions rather than just listening; that women want to share and for their husbands to invest time to better understand. The point of showing the video is not to galvanize that stereotype, but to, in a lighthearted way, show the importance of listening.

(Slide 17)

Committed to be Considerate

1 Peter 3:7 – Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives

Peter directed this passage specifically at husbands. But it's certainly good and proper for both husbands and wives to be considerate to one another.

Remembering how important communication is and how beneficial it is to keep each other informed (and to be a good listener), write down at least three ways you could finish this thought:

“My husband/wife shows consideration for me when he/she...”

Give the participants a couple minutes to think about this and jot down some responses. Remind them—They aren't trying to point out all the things their spouses have been neglecting, rather, they are simply sharing practical ideas... providing their spouse with a blueprint or instruction guide for exercising their considerate hearts!

Once each participant has something down, instruct them to discuss these together, sometime after this session.

(Slide 18)

Committed to be Christ-like

(Slide 19) Be the kind of person that's easy to be around!

(Slide 20)

When I speak and act more like Christ, I am....

- Honoring ___**Christ**_____
- Honoring ___**Spouse**_____
- Touching _____**the Heart**_____

In Lesson 1 we admitted that many marriages start in The Tingles phase—driven by attraction and emotion. After a while, we realize that our relationship needs to be based on something more solid. The last few lessons have helped us identify that solid foundation. Our marriage is based on a Christ-like love that shows itself in service and commitment. And when spouses are saying YOU FIRST, using words that BUILD UP, being PATIENT and KIND—that touches the heart. That rekindles the tingles.

CLOSING EXERCISE

Give the participants 5-10 minutes to work on this. If you're short of time, you could make this a "take-home" assignment. If you have ample time, you could also ask if any brave souls would like to share their answers to either of the first two. Close with a prayer.

TWO things I've learned or TWO new perspectives I've gained from these sessions are:

TWO things I can do to make life easier for my spouse are:

TWO genuine compliments I can give to my spouse as we're driving home later today are:
