



Lesson One

OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

It seems like many people have their “happy place” —somewhere they like to be or an activity they like doing. What might some of those “happy places” be?

When “the Tingles” Strike. That heading comes from a section in Gary Chapman’s book, *Things I Wish I’d Known Before We Got Married*. In it, he references research done by Dorothy Tennov. According to that research, “the tingles” stage of the marriage lasts about two years. After about two years (longer for some, less for others), couples start to come down from that emotional high and a reality sets in. They realize their marriage needs to be built on something more than emotions and “tingles.”

The tingles stage of the marriage is also known as the “in love” or the infatuation stage—where emotions are driving the bus and one feels head-over-heels in love.

UNDERSTANDING THE OBSTACLES

- The Curse of _____

List TWO amazing qualities in your spouse you sometimes take for granted:	
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- Epidemic of _____

List TWO entities (beside your spouse) that some-times get the best of your quality time and energy:	
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- Chapters of _____

List TWO ways you have changed since the day you made your wedding vows:	
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- Fruits of the _____

Take a moment for quiet, self-reflection.
 Identify TWO bad habits or attitudes you'd like to get rid of. (YOU—not your spouse)

EMBRACING THE SOLUTION

So how is this going to work? How can two sinful people overcome all these obstacles?

Start to develop some answers from the passages below. Take five minutes—read through the passages and create three lists based on answers in the passages:

What Jesus has done - What benefits we receive - What we are encouraged to do

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Psalms 103:8,10 - The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love... 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

1 John 3:16 - This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Colossians 3:12,13 - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

What Jesus has done	What benefits we receive	What we are encouraged to do

_____ is the solution

As a summary to the passages you've just read, finish each thought:

- Jesus put me first; I can now...
- Jesus forgives me freely; I can now...

JESUS IS THE KEY TO OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

When the world talks about love in relationships, it often means something far different from when the Bible talks about love. Apart from Jesus, our understanding of love would be very shallow and selfish. Jesus introduces us to a new way of thinking and acting. You saw it in the verses you just read. There's a special word the Bible uses to describe the love Jesus has for us, a love so deep and so undeserved—*agape*. He loved us and gave himself up for us. He put our needs ahead of his own. That's *agape* love. That's far different than obsession or infatuation. When God tells husbands and wives to love each other, he is directing them to take the tingles out of the driver's seat and replace it with the love of Christ. This is the "something more" our marriages are built upon.

In the sessions that follow we'll look at the specific strength and guidance we get from Jesus, as well as some practical ideas to put *agape* love into practice. As we end today's session, think quietly for a minute and jot down several possible completions to the thought below.

(As you record your thoughts, try to have your goals also be solutions to some of the obstacles we mentioned earlier.)

COMPLETE THIS THOUGHT: *Because of all that Jesus has done for me, here's what I would like to do for my spouse:*

ALSO, identify two things you can do in the coming days and weeks that will strengthen your relationship with Jesus.