



Lesson Two

OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

God’s approach to marriage and his definition of love are so different than the mainstream approach to love and marriage.

List at least two other examples of how God’s ways are very different than the ways of the world.

God wants husbands and wives to have a relationship built on sacrificial love, agape love. That’s not easy for us. So God himself promises to educate us with his Word, model agape love in his Son, and equip and motivate us with his gospel. With God’s constant help we can give ourselves to our spouses. As Paul says, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). In fact, it’s already happening in your marriage.

Take 30 seconds and identify at least two things your spouse does to serve you.

Quotable Quote:

We tend to think of love as a mystery, and the mystery of what makes us fall in love is fascinating. But staying in love is not mysterious. What makes marriage work is predictable, universal, and completely under our control. People stay in love in very common ways.
(Kevin A. Thompson, *Friends, Partners & Lovers*, page 28)

Here's a challenge for you: What's one of the most difficult functions of being a husband or a wife? (NOTE: It's also one of the most important functions!) We'll answer that in a few moments, but first:

Read the passages below carefully and complete the three tasks below.

Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands, **love** your wives, just **as Christ loved the church and gave himself up** for her.

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.**

Philippians 2:1-4 - Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. **Do nothing out of selfish ambition** or vain conceit. Rather, in humility **value others above yourselves**, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

1. Using your own words, summarize the bolded portions of the passages.
2. From personal experience, why is it so difficult to put others ahead of self?
3. Decide on two or three ways the Philippians passage motivates us to do what God has urged us to do.

In the box below write an answer to the question:

What's one of the most difficult functions of being a husband or a wife? (And also one of the most important!)

Come up with a godly and loving counter to the self-centered attitudes below.

self-centered attitude

godly counter

<i>Impatient</i> -----	_____
<i>Mean-spirited</i> -----	_____
<i>Greedy</i> -----	_____
<i>Arrogant</i> -----	_____
<i>Selfish, me-first</i> -----	_____
<i>Short-tempered</i> -----	_____
<i>Holds onto grudges</i> -----	_____

Pick three from the list above that you'd like to intentionally work on as you strive to love and serve your spouse. Put a star by them.

In the box below, write a prayer, asking the Lord to help you make improvements in the areas identified above. *(It sometimes helps when we articulate our thoughts—broad concepts can become a little more specific, realistic, and attainable.)*

To put my spouse's interests ahead of mine—that's hard to do. So it's important to remember who we are.

Read the passages below. In the box that follows, write down one or two ways these passages can help you commit to less self-centeredness and more agape love.

2 Corinthians 5:14,15,17 – For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

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

CLOSING EXERCISE

OPTION 1: Do you remember the quote we started with today? “People stay in love in very common ways.” Below is a sampling of practical ways spouses can show agape love to one another. Take TWO minutes to identify the TWO you feel are most important. Then, add TWO of your own in the blanks provided. (*Pretend you are offering advice to a couple about to get married—what valuable tips would you highlight?*)

- Try to better understand your spouse
- Assume the best—take words and actions in the kindest possible way
- Realize the little things are powerful (ex. Thank you, compliments)
- Grow in faith—stay connected to the Word of God
- Pray for your spouse
- _____
- _____

OPTION 2: You started today's lesson by listing ways your spouse serves you. Now, take 90 seconds and list three practical ways you can serve your spouse in the days ahead. Be very specific.