



How Do You Say “I Love You”?

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Complete each of the following sentences in one or more ways.
- Take your time. Honest and complete answers will help your spouse love you better.
- Try not to skip any. Take as much time as you need to think of an answer that is true for you. Remember that your answers, whatever they are, are correct because they are coming from your perspective.
- Complete the entire activity on your own. Do not share your answers with one another until you are instructed to do so later.

1. The nicest gift I ever received from my partner was when ...
2. I gain a strong sense of inner comfort when my partner ...
3. The most meaningful thing a person could ever do for his / her partner is ...
4. I wish my partner would more frequently ...
5. When I’m “down,” I like my partner to ...
6. After an argument, I want my partner to ...
7. If I wanted to feel accepted, I would ask my partner to ...

8. What I like best about myself is ...

9. What I like least about myself is ...

10. When I want to show my love to my partner, I ...

INSTRUCTIONS (after both have completed the exercise):

Step 1: Remember that your spouse's answers are all correct. It is very important that you do not criticize or minimize your spouse's answers in any way. The use of sarcasm is strongly discouraged.

Step 2: Verbally share your answers to each question with one another.

Step 3: After you have completed Step 2, write down answers to at least 2 of the following 3 statements. When you have both finished, verbally share your answers with your spouse.

1. One thing I will pay more attention to regarding my spouse is ...

2. For the sake of my spouse, one thing I will start doing is ...

3. For the sake of my spouse, one thing I will stop doing is ...

Once you have finished Step 3, read the Conclusion out loud.

CONCLUSION: Jesus Sees You

One summer day in the city of Merriam, Kansas, the temperature was around 100 degrees. Sarah was walking through the parking lot of the local Famous Footwear store where she was working when she saw a car with a baby all alone inside of it. The windows were up, the doors were locked, the car was off, and the baby was screaming at the top of her lungs, dripping with sweat.

Sarah knew there wasn't much time, so she screamed for help. Someone nearby grabbed something from her trunk and tried to break the driver's side window, but the window didn't crack. Another woman came with a screwdriver to see if that could help, but it didn't. Sarah eventually grabbed a tire iron from her car and started hitting the window with it. She finally

got it to crack a little bit when another woman threw a truck hitch at the window and shattered it, saving the baby. The whole thing lasted maybe three minutes, though Sarah believes the baby had been locked in that car, suffering alone in the oppressive heat, and not being seen by anyone, for much longer.

What that baby experienced physically is what some spouses feel emotionally. They feel unseen. Their requests for help go unanswered. Their needs go unmet. The loving promises their spouse once made to them go unfulfilled for long periods of time. They don't remember the last time their spouse asked them the very simple question: "How are you doing?" They look at their spouse and see something similar to what Jesus did in Mark chapter 6:34— "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd."

What Jesus saw were people who loved to do their own thing and were easily pulled away from what was really important by any number of unimportant distractions. Or, to say it another way, when Jesus saw them, he saw husbands who aren't always very good at loving their wife as Christ loves the Church. He saw wives who use their husband's imperfections as an excuse to ignore their husband's need for respect and trust. And what did Jesus do when he saw them?

"He had compassion on them." He saw that they needed something. Husbands and wives whose sins are seen by God need to breathe in the reality of being forgiven. So he stepped not into a parking lot holding a truck hitch, but into human skin, knowing one day it would hang on a cross during an oppressive, suffocating crucifixion, where he would not be saved as he willingly offered his life as a sacrifice that would leave each of us forgiven, and without any doubt that we are seen and loved by the God who is obviously determined to stay by your side through everything.

That's a powerful gift God has given to us through Jesus—the gift of being seen. And forgiven.

Give that same gift to your spouse, over and over, again and again. Make time each day when you give them your undivided attention. Ask them questions about their day, their hopes, their hurts, and their dreams. Never stop being curious about them, just as you were when you started dating. You'll discover there's always more to learn. And as you do, look for opportunities to remind them regularly that they are seen by God and also by the one who is in the best position on earth to not only see their needs, but also to meet them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father in heaven, thank you for seeing our need for forgiveness, and for so graciously and completely meeting that need through the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus. Help us to never grow tired of getting to know one another so that each of us might daily better see our spouse and also see the many ways we are uniquely positioned to meet their needs. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.