

MARRIAGE

®

IN CHRIST



Pray Talk Act

Pentecost

2018



Pentecost 2018

*“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth:
it is to your advantage that I go away,
for if I do not go away,
the Advocate will not come to you;
but if I go, I will send him to you.”
John 16:7*

All scripture quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV) unless otherwise noted.

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Meditations by William C. Wacker

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Pentecost and the Wedding Feast at Cana

Pentecost, the great feast of the Holy Spirit, is often referred to as the birthday of the Church. It marks the end of the Easter season and the beginning of ordinary time. More than that, the Fathers of the Church often linked together the wedding feast at Cana and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The presence of the Holy Spirit was symbolized by the wine at Cana and the sober inebriation of the Apostles on Pentecost. So, it seems most appropriate to offer a set of Scriptures and meditations with the work of the Holy Spirit in mind.

In the Holy Spirit we are able to see God present in the most ordinary aspects of family and married life. His power and presence bring joy, delight, consolation, endurance and peace. The Spirit protects our unity when he helps us to not take offence and moves us to reconcile and forgive. This is the fruit of the Spirit that St. Paul talks about in Galatians 5:22. In the Holy Spirit we can have a new normal!

The grace associated with Christian marriage is rich and varied. It is the very practical power of God present in our marriage that allows us to live one life with our spouse. That grace fills us with the courage to face the inevitable hardships of life, endurance to sustain a lifelong commitment, wisdom to raise a family, generosity to be friends of the poor, and above all, joy. That grace allows us to model for the world God's love for his people, Christ's love for the Church, our ultimate end to be one with God and the life of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the person who makes possible a marriage in Christ. Only in the Holy Spirit can we live a married life full of the love of God. However, for that grace to have its full effect, we need to respond. It is God's work first and foremost, but it also requires our yes. Over time, our yes and the power of the Spirit lead to tangible signs of change in our marriage (see the list above).

Where have you seen the Holy Spirit?

When we got married, God came to live with us in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was God's wedding gift to us. His grace and power are inexhaustible, always surprising and unfortunately easy to miss. While the Spirit is at always work, it is usually just under the surface of our mostly ordinary life. One of the ways in which we can become more attentive to the work of the Holy Spirit and to learn to cooperate more closely with him is to tell stories about where we have experienced him.

For those of us who have hosted seminars or been discussion facilitators, having a new story each week requires that we be more attentive to the Spirit's work and presence in our lives. Little stories are about how we have experienced him protecting our unity with more tenderness, and more joy. They are about how we are more attentive to each other, have grown in intimacy in our prayer together or learned to reconcile more quickly. When we share those stories with our friends and family, two things happen. First, we grow and become more attentive to the Spirit. It becomes easier for us to grow in holiness as a couple. Second, when we share our stories, we share our lives. Our friends can recognize that they are not alone in **their** struggles and they experience hope. Our stories are evangelical.

You would think telling stories is easy. After all, we are absorbed by social media, and we live in a world that seems to be constantly communicating. Yet, many couples say, “You don’t understand, we don’t have any stories to tell. Nothing story worthy ever happens in our marriage.” Good stories may be a matter of perspective. Good stories require practice at recognizing Holy Spirit moments, bright spots, and the subtle changes that the Holy Spirit is bringing about in our marriages. Looking for those stories forces us to be attentive and intentional.

Eventually you can look back over the last several months and ask what is better? You may not see drastic changes; you will see small ones. Do you laugh a little more, express more affection, say good morning, good bye, I love you a little more? Do you pray more often?

In this Pentecost PTA we are experimenting with a new idea. We have inserted stories after days 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42 and 50. These are stories that attempt to answer the question **what does the work of the Holy Spirit look like in our marriage?** They are also there to encourage you to write your own story. On the facing pages we have supplied some questions to help you come up with your own stories. We encourage you to share the stories with others. It is a great way to remain accountable and intentional and to witness to the Lord.

The feast of Pentecost was originally celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover. In that “spirit” we offer fifty days of PTA and an invitation to encounter the Spirit more personally as you tell your stories about his presence. Enjoy!

On the Feast of Pentecost 2018,

Bill Wacker, Director

p.s. The stories in this edition come from stories Adella and I have told over the years as a host couple. In future editions, we would love to use your stories. You can send them to info@marriageinchrist.com.

Day One

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. ⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs -- in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Meditation

The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and they became a new creation! Something happened that made the crowd think that they were drunk. Was it that they spoke in tongues? I doubt it. It's hard to understand the slurring of a drunk and the crowd understood the disciples quite well. It must have been the great joy and exuberance that accompanied this extraordinary experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The crowd was witnessing the great and glorious day of the Lord! It was an experience that could only have been described with images of cosmic proportions, e.g., sun becoming dark and the moon turned to blood! On our wedding day, the Holy Spirit came down upon us and two people became one new creation in Christ. Oh, the joy that filled us on that day! Oh, the joy, or as one writer puts it, the sober intoxication of the Holy Spirit, that marks every day of our new creation!

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is our favorite place to be together?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be kind

- Be sure to say, "Good morning" and "Good night."
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Take his/her car to the car wash.

Practice good manners

- Decide not to text someone else while you are talking to your spouse.
- Say "please" and "thank you."

Be affectionate

- Call or text your spouse and say, "I'm thinking of you," or "I love you."
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, "I'm so glad you are my best friend."

Day Two

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. ⁹ When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Meditation

Joy fills our hearts when we encounter Jesus. But what happens when we get caught up in a pursuit of pleasure or become intent on fulfilling our own interests? We are in danger of letting our friendship with Jesus and his Father slip into second or third place in our lives. When that happens, it becomes harder to hear the voice of God in our marriage and the quiet joy of his love fades. It is not hard to imagine Mary, with a little sadness turning to Jesus and saying, "they have no wine." Then she would turn to us and say, "Do whatever he tells you." Jesus would turn the water of our ordinary lives into the best wine we have ever tasted. He longs to fill us with the Holy Spirit, the source of true joy in our marriage.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Do you remember what presents we got on our wedding day?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be kind

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.

Practice good manners

- Decide not to text someone else while you are talking to your spouse.
- Say “please” and “thank you.”

Be affectionate

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”

Day Three

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Song of Solomon 8:6-7

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. ⁷ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

Meditation

Restoring joy is one of the chief works of the Holy Spirit who is the love of God in person. The Spirit is the seal God has set upon our hearts and arms. He is the seal that marks us as God's treasured possession, his intimate friends. The Spirit is the very promise of God to be faithful. He is the promise that the love of God is stronger than death itself. His love is the pearl of great price or the treasure buried in a field. It is worth more than all the wealth we have accumulated – which is destined to be left behind in any case. There is nothing that can be compared to the love of God who lives with us in our union as husband and wife.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was the first movie you saw in a theater? Who were you with?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be kind

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Take his/her car to the car wash.

Practice good manners

- Decide not to text someone else while you are talking to your spouse.
- Say “please” and “thank you.”

Be affectionate

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”

Day Four

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Song of Solomon 4:9-11

You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. ¹⁰ How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride! how much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! ¹¹ Your lips distill nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.

Meditation

It is hard to imagine the intensity of Christ's love for his bride the Church, or his love for each of us for that matter, is best described by the intimate holy Eros of a groom completely captured by his beautiful bride. Not only is God captivated by us, he is a willing captive. The whole of salvation history is about God rescuing his beloved bride from the consequences of our sin. It is the story of God pursuing her, wooing her, rescuing her so that one day he can be one with her forever. Our marriages, our love serve as a signpost for the world pointing to the great reality of a God who is head over heels in love with us. This holy Eros is one of the great gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is God's great delight to allow us to share in this tender, romantic, joy filled, experience of his love for our spouse. The profound truth is that God is deeply and passionately in love with each of us. We move his heart. There is something about the way he has made us that he finds irresistible. It is not because we are so good or talented. It is not because he *has* to love us, because after all he is God. It is not because we can be of service to him either. He just loves the unrepeatable, infinitely valuable, glorious person that is you! "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride!"

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What kind of movies do you enjoy the most? Why?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be kind

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.

Practice good manners

- Decide not to text someone else while you are talking to your spouse.
- Say “please” and “thank you.”

Be affectionate

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”

Day Five

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 10:3-4,14-15

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. Jesus said to them, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. . . 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

Meditation

What does the voice of Jesus our Good Shepherd sound like? To hear his voice, we need to abandon ourselves to the Holy Spirit. But what does that look like? It has been said that we should be like good actors, listening attentively to the voice of a hidden prompter who speaks within us. This hidden prompter teaches us everything and instructs us about everything. At times we need only a simple glance inward, a movement of the heart, a prayer. Sometimes we only recognize it in retrospect, when we tell our stories about the Holy Spirit at work. As we become more attuned to the sound of that voice, we become able to hear it in "real time." We can experience the Holy Spirit like the gentle breeze that fills the sails of a boat on a calm lake.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What's something that your parents did that you promised yourself never to say or do, but now say or do all the time?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be kind

- Be sure to say, "Good morning" and "Good night."
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Take his/her car to the car wash.

Practice good manners

- Decide not to text someone else while you are talking to your spouse.
- Say "please" and "thank you."

Be affectionate

- Call or text your spouse and say, "I'm thinking of you," or "I love you."
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, "I'm so glad you are my best friend."

Day Six

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 6:4-13

Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵ When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷ Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. thirsty.

Meditation

You are in the crowd and you are hungry. You overhear the disciples say that six-months wages would barely be enough money to get a couple of things from the McDonalds dollar menu for this many people. But then Jesus does something quite unexpected. He asks the disciples to have everyone sit down on the green grass. Jesus says a little prayer, takes the five loaves and two small fish and starts giving them out. Imagine your surprise when there is still food when he gets to you. Not a simple happy meal, but a feast. Everyone had all they could eat and there were leftovers. Oh, the extravagant hospitality of our Lord! The scene shifts. Jesus is present, and our home is the setting for his remarkable hospitality. Through us he feeds the hungry, comforts the sick, and makes a home for the lonely. This is the work that the Holy Spirit does. He allows us and empowers us to participate in the great love of Jesus.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who is the most famous person you have ever met?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be kind

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.

Practice good manners

- Decide not to text someone else while you are talking to your spouse.
- Say “please” and “thank you.”

Be affectionate

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”

Day Seven

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 2:1-6

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

Meditation

Jesus was born into a human family. He had a mother and a father who were married to each other. It is true that his conception was miraculous, but the Incarnation is about being an ordinary human being in an ordinary family composed of a husband-wife, child and extended family. The really extraordinary aspect of this is that the God of the universe chose the path of ordinary human biology to enter the world. It is irrelevant that Joseph is not the "biological" father. Jesus was really the child of Mary, a human woman. The God of Israel is in the process of undoing the curse of Genesis 3 and is doing it through the child of a new Eve. After the conception, which is miraculous, everything else about Jesus' birth and life is ordinary, human, just like ours. If one is looking for insight into the dignity of women look no further. It speaks volumes that God entrusted himself in the most vulnerable state we can imagine, a helpless infant, to the care of a woman/mother. The Holy Spirit empowers all of us and confirms the extraordinary dignity of the vocation of marriage and parenthood.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the worst thing you have ever eaten?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be kind

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Take his/her car to the car wash.

Practice good manners

- Decide not to text someone else while you are talking to your spouse.
- Say “please” and “thank you.”

Be affectionate

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- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”

The Holy Spirit transforms our annoying habits into delightful opportunities to love.

Adella often leaves her shoes in the front entryway of our house and it used to bother me. In her defense, she stays on the entryway rug and kicks her shoes off so that she doesn't track dirt into the house. Then because her hands are usually full, she can't get them in the closet. However, as I said, it bugged me. Although I mentioned it a number of times, nothing changed. One day, we were talking with one of the other leaders of the Marriage in Christ outreach and he told this little story.

His wife is an elementary school teacher and she loves to work with pencils. She uses lots of pencils. She also leaves them all over the house. My friend told me that it bugged him. He could track her progress through the house by following the trail of pencils. No matter how often he mentioned how this habit annoyed him, nothing changed. He knew he had to make a choice about how he responded to the pencils. He could berate his wife and demand that she change, or he could simply pick up the pencils and use each one as a reminder of how much he loved her. He chose the latter. He credits the Holy Spirit for the change. Now he smiles and is filled with joy when he finds a pencil.

I took that story to heart and decided that I would change my response to Adella's shoes. The next day, I put her shoes in the closet without telling her that it bugged me. Something changed in me. I stopped being annoyed. Now, I look forward to finding her shoes in the entry way so I can express my love for her. It is true what they say, feelings of love follow loving actions. I smile when I put her shoes away.

What story would you tell this week?

Below is a list of topics for stories. Use this list to remind you of a change or a new state in your marriage. Perhaps your story will be based on something that happened last week. Or a favorite moment from a previous Marriage in Christ seminar or story you heard there. Or bright spots or highlights of the past week.

Acts of

Tenderness

Kindness

Gentleness

Affection

Attentiveness

Beginning new habits

Bright spots

Compliments

Courage

Forgiveness and reconciliation

Friendship

Funny moments

Generosity

Good ideas we have adopted

Healing of old wounds

Hope

Humor (positive)

“I didn’t know that about you . . .”

Joy and laughter

Knowing more about each other

Memories

“I remember how beautiful you were”

“I remember ‘seeing’ you for the first time”

“I remember our wedding day”

New awareness of God, as Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit

Pleasant surprises

Seeing each other in a new way

Small changes

Tenderness

Living one life together

Day Eight

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Acts 1:4-8

He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Meditation

Power! Oh, it is so tempting. To be in charge, to have our way, to win!! Having power is better than winning the lottery. Having power can lead to money, to all the things we want and for which we long – except power can't force someone to love us. Love requires freedom. So, what kind of power will come upon us? It is the power to live human life in a new way. It is the power to say no to our basest instincts and desires. It is the power to leave the other free, to risk love. More than that, it is the power to turn outward, to offer the world this new way to live marriage, to share with the world the great joy of knowing Jesus and his Father, to share with the world the divine life of God. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was our most generous act as a couple?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Say I love you

- Look your spouse in the eyes and say, "I love you."
- Create an opportunity for your spouse to have quiet time for herself/himself.
- Give your spouse a backrub.

Be affectionate

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Walk arm in arm.
- Hold hands.

Day Nine

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is kind, and my burden is light." (trans. modified by WCW).

Meditation

This perhaps is not the translation that you are most familiar with and technically “easy” probably makes more sense when associated with “burden.” On the other hand, there are many surprises in Scripture. Who would have guessed that the Greek word for “kind,” chrēstos is the word Matthew chose to translate the word Jesus used to describe his yoke? The range of meaning for chrēstos includes kind, loving, merciful, morally good, upright, and of course, easy to bear. The surprise waiting for us is that when we are tired and burdened, we can come to Jesus and give him our troubles. He will carry them, and in exchange we will put on his yoke, which is to experience his kindness and lightness.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the most mischievous thing you have ever done? Did you get into trouble for it?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Say I love you

- Look your spouse in the eyes and say, "I love you."
- Create an opportunity for your spouse to have quiet time for herself/himself.
- Give your spouse a backrub.

Be affectionate

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Walk arm in arm.
- Hold hands.

Day Ten

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Meditation

Life and love are choices that we can make. So often our feelings rise up and seem to demand that we lash out, even at the one we love with our whole heart. It is a small consolation that this battle is not ours alone, nor are we the first ones to have had to engage in the very human struggle. But when we win the battle with ourselves and choose to love, the promises of God are true. It is so tempting to let ourselves be led astray, but with the Holy Spirit we can choose life. We can choose love. Thank God for such a great wedding present.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is our most meaningful Scripture passage?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Say I love you

- Look your spouse in the eyes and say, "I love you."
- Create an opportunity for your spouse to have quiet time for herself/himself.
- Give your spouse a backrub.

Be affectionate

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Walk arm in arm.
- Hold hands.

Day Eleven

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Revelation 19:6-9

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; ⁸ to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" -- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Meditation

While I was recovering from heart surgery, I had an opportunity to reflect on how the Holy Spirit was at work in our marriage. I was deeply moved by the way in which Adella cared for me when I was at my most vulnerable. There was a time when I could not even get out of bed without her assistance. I was praying one day and thinking about all of her little and big acts of love for me. During that prayer time, I had a vision of the most beautiful fabric I had ever seen. Strands of the fabric were made up of our actions and the Holy Spirit's actions. Not separate strands of our actions and the Holy Spirit, but each strand was made up of the human and divine. It reminded me of the wedding garment of the bride of Christ. In every part of our life together I have my experiences, and my experience of the Holy Spirit moving me. Adella has her experiences, and her experience of the Holy Spirit moving her. And since it is the one Holy Spirit moving each of us what emerges is a wonderful unity – a whole life, a beautiful fabric.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was our most tender prayer time together?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Say I love you

- Look your spouse in the eyes and say, "I love you."
- Create an opportunity for your spouse to have quiet time for herself/himself.
- Give your spouse a backrub.

Be affectionate

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Walk arm in arm.
- Hold hands.

Day Twelve

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning when God create the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Meditation

God's breath, his spirit was the wind that swept over the watery, chaotic void. The Spirit brought order to the untamed trackless "stuff of the world." It is God's breath, his Holy Spirit that comes to us at our baptism and makes new creatures out of the old sinful person we were. It is God's Holy Spirit that comes to us in a special way on our wedding day to make one new being out of two distinct persons. In the miracle that is our union, God takes the ordinary lives of a man and a woman and makes of them a sign of his great love for his people, the Church. The Holy Spirit is the creative power that turns ordinary life into a beacon that shines brightly in a dark often chaotic world.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the strangest belief you had as a child?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Say I love you

- Look your spouse in the eyes and say, "I love you."
- Create an opportunity for your spouse to have quiet time for herself/himself.
- Give your spouse a backrub.

Be affectionate

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Walk arm in arm.
- Hold hands.

Day Thirteen

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 1:34-35

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Meditation

Astronomers estimate that the universe is expanding at about 44.7 miles (71.9 kilometers) per second per megaparsec. (One megaparsec is about 3.26 million light-years.) Those numbers are very difficult to grasp or comprehend. The power that was unleashed in the big bang staggers the imagination. The forces that propelled the material of the universe outward continue to propel it to this day. That is the creative power of our God who, in an act even more impressive than the big bang, overshadowed a young woman and in her womb, God, the second person of the Trinity, became a human being! God, the all-powerful creator of the universe was incarnate, he was visible to all who had eyes to see.

That same Holy Spirit was called down upon us at our wedding and in an unbelievable act of new creation, he made one new being out of two. God has chosen to join himself to us and thereby make himself more visible in the world. We become participants in the great mystery of the incarnation.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- In what ways are we intentional in expressing our love?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go shopping together.

Make time to laugh together

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Share your favorite comic from today's paper.
- No negative jokes.

Be kind to each other

- Do a random and completely unexpected act of kindness for your spouse. This could include emptying the dishwasher or another small chore.
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Create opportunities for your spouse to have quiet time for himself/herself.

Day Fourteen

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 1:18-20

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Meditation

Here we see the unfolding of the great mystery of God's ultimate plan, which is the union of God and man. Jesus is God who has become a human being, not sort of a human, not a pretend human, not part god/part man, but fully human and fully divine. Joseph's union with Mary provided a human home for the Incarnate Son of God. Our union as spouses participates in the great mystery of the Incarnation as well. Our marriages point in the same direction and reflect the same great mystery. It is a wonderful and terrible responsibility we have as married couples. We, too, are to make space in our lives for Jesus, to in a sense, become a home for the incarnate Son of God. In that we are to be bright signs that point to God's desire to one day be one with his bride the Church. Do not be afraid, this too is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who is the happiest person you know?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go shopping together.

Make time to laugh together

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Share your favorite comic from today's paper.
- No negative jokes.

Be kind to each other

- Do a random and completely unexpected act of kindness for your spouse. This could include emptying the dishwasher or another small chore.
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Create opportunities for your spouse to have quiet time for himself/herself.

Participating in the life of the Trinity!

One morning after we had prayed, Adella and I were talking about the upcoming MIC seminars and she was putting the dates in her phone. I was getting impatient because I wanted to get on with my day. Even though she was doing me a favor, I was not patient. What happened next is evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in our marriage – moving me, sometimes gently – sometimes not.

First, we prayed and that helped, but I was still a little out of sorts. So, I went into the kitchen to speak to the Lord about how busy I was and how overwhelmed I felt. I asked did it really have to be this hard to do his work? Well you get the picture.

Second, we expressed our love in action. One of the little acts of kindness that we do is to refill each other's coffee cup. We have also been working on expressing genuine gratitude for those little acts of kindness. Sometimes I find that I have to act kindly in hopes that my attitude will follow, because if I had acted on my feelings that morning, I would probably not have refilled her coffee. In the past, I might not even have been nice to her because I was so preoccupied—which is a polite way of saying I was being selfish.

But there is a new grace at work in our marriage. We are more open to being moved by the Holy Spirit – even if it is months or years later that we recognize that it was him at work.

Here is what happened. I chose to fill her coffee cup. I brought cream for it because I know she likes it that way. When I poured her coffee, and offered her the cream, she smiled and said, “thank you, honey.” Her expression of gratitude was like putting a cool salve on a painful sun burn—it brought immediate relief to my angst. It was also the Lord's response to my “words” with him in the kitchen. I heard his gratitude in her words as well. I saw in her smile, the Holy Spirit smile. The joy of that moment is the hallmark of participating in the life of the Trinity.

In the experience of loving her, I encountered Christ/Holy Spirit loving me in and through Adella's grace filled response to my simple act of love. She said thank you to me, and to Christ/the Holy Spirit at work in me. It was such a simple action on both of our parts, but it protected and deepened our friendship with each other and with the Lord. This is participating in the life of the Trinity!

What story would you tell this week?

Below is a list of topics for stories. Use this list to remind you of a change or a new state in your marriage. Perhaps your story will be based on something that happened last week. Or a favorite moment from a previous Marriage in Christ seminar or story you heard there. Or bright spots or highlights of the past week.

Acts of	Hope
Tenderness	Humor (positive)
Kindness	“I didn’t know that about you . . .”
Gentleness	Joy and laughter
Affection	Knowing more about each other
Attentiveness	Memories
Beginning new habits	“I remember how beautiful you were”
Bright spots	“I remember ‘seeing’ you for the first time”
Compliments	“I remember our wedding day”
Courage	New awareness of God, as Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit
Forgiveness and reconciliation	Pleasant surprises
Friendship	Seeing each other in a new way
Funny moments	Small changes
Generosity	Tenderness
Good ideas we have adopted	Living one life together
Healing of old wounds	

Day Fifteen

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. ²⁵ Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; ²⁷ but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

Meditation

St. Paul was familiar with the Olympic-like Isthmian games. They were held every two years in honor of Poseidon in the Isthmus sanctuary near Corinth. Many of the visitors would have stayed in tents – some of which may have been made by Paul during his stay in Corinth. The games included foot races, wrestling, boxing, and the pentathlon. At some point horse and chariot races were added. The prize for the winners of the games was a garland or crown made of wild celery or pine boughs. St. Paul saw how hard the athletes strived for their moment of glory and a prize that would soon wither and fade. How much more, St. Paul suggests, should we strive with all of our might for a prize that will never fade? Paul is not suggesting that we could earn our reward, but he is saying very clearly that what we do matters. Our efforts are important. What we do matters a great deal. Self-control is the Holy Spirit's way of joining himself to our struggles and empowering us to run the good race.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your favorite meal to cook? Who have you made it for?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go shopping together.

Make time to laugh together

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Share your favorite comic from today's paper.
- No negative jokes.

Be kind to each other

- Do a random and completely unexpected act of kindness for your spouse. This could include emptying the dishwasher or another small chore.
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Create opportunities for your spouse to have quiet time for himself/herself.

Day Sixteen

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Meditation

“Do not worry about anything.” “Do not be afraid.” “Trust in the Lord.” Why is it so easy to say, but so hard to do? The answer might lie in where we are looking. Every moment we spend in rejoicing and giving thanks for all that we have, is a moment we don’t have to fret on what we don’t have or to fear the future. If we focus on Jesus, if we focus on our spouse there is simply less time to worry. But it is not just an issue of time, it is the orientation of our life. To live as if Jesus is our intimate friend means that we are usually aware of his presence. He is sharing one life with us. If we act in such a way that Jesus is our constant companion, we will have his peace. It is the certitude that with Jesus all things will work together for good. That peace brings order to the chaos of fear and worry. It is a peace that flows from God himself. It is a peace that defies comprehension, but it is not irrational, because it is guaranteed by the Creator himself.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What book made the biggest impact on you as a teenager?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go shopping together.

Make time to laugh together

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Share your favorite comic from today's paper.
- No negative jokes.

Be kind to each other

- Do a random and completely unexpected act of kindness for your spouse. This could include emptying the dishwasher or another small chore.
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Create opportunities for your spouse to have quiet time for himself/herself.

Day Seventeen

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 14:7-11

If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

Meditation

It is a great mystery. Jesus is an entirely different person from his Father, yet he said to see him is to have seen his Father. Their relationship is like that of the best of human friendships or the most intimate and loving relationship of a husband and wife—only more profound. When a husband and wife have grown in their love for one another and their unity deepens, you can hear one when you listen to the other speak. Sometimes, we can hear our spouse speak, even when they are miles away.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the most unusual thing you have ever eaten?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go shopping together.

Make time to laugh together

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Share your favorite comic from today's paper.
- No negative jokes.

Be kind to each other

- Do a random and completely unexpected act of kindness for your spouse. This could include emptying the dishwasher or another small chore.
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Create opportunities for your spouse to have quiet time for himself/herself.

Day Eighteen

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 14:25-27

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Meditation

She intended to send the email invitation to everyone in the family, but her finger slipped and instead of inviting one of her sisters, she invited the person whose name happened to be right next to her sister's name in her address book. The friend was surprised and declined the invitation, but the uninvited sister was hurt. Before the second sister knew she was the victim of a simple typo, she was whipped this way and that by her emotions and was sorely tempted to express her hurt and anger in ways that would have ruptured the family. Fortunately, she did not say anything, but years of poor communication and the mischief of the "ruler of this age" had caused a lot of unnecessary emotional turmoil. What is truly remarkable is that this painful drama could have been avoided by good communication and by choosing to think the best of each other. The second sister had a choice between believing that it was an intentional slight or a simple mistake. The power of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to choose to think the best of our spouse and his/her intentions. That will allow us to rest in the peace that Jesus gives.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your most meaningful/powerful church service?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go shopping together.

Make time to laugh together

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Share your favorite comic from today's paper.
- No negative jokes.

Be kind to each other

- Do a random and completely unexpected act of kindness for your spouse. This could include emptying the dishwasher or another small chore.
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Create opportunities for your spouse to have quiet time for himself/herself.

Day Nineteen

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 14:16-17

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

Meditation

We know that happiness and unhappiness on earth depend in large part upon the quality of our relationships. The Trinity reveals the secret to good relationships. Love, in its different forms, is what makes relationships beautiful, free and gratifying. God's power is the power of love not domination. Domination, wanting to be right, wanting to win, poisons a relationship. Domination desires to possess another person, or to use that person instead of giving ourselves to him or her. Pope Francis puts it this way, "Loving another person involves the joy of contemplating and appreciating their innate beauty and sacredness, which is greater than my needs. This enables me to seek their good even when they cannot belong to me, or when they are no longer physically appealing but intrusive and annoying." That is the work of the Holy Spirit in marriage.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What word best describes your father?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go shopping together.

Make time to laugh together

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Share your favorite comic from today's paper.
- No negative jokes.

Be kind to each other

- Do a random and completely unexpected act of kindness for your spouse. This could include emptying the dishwasher or another small chore.
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Create opportunities for your spouse to have quiet time for himself/herself.

Day Twenty

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷ But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" -- ¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

Meditation

In Corinth, Roman wisdom, customs and culture dictated every aspect of one's life. Mercy and pity were regarded as character defects. The gods did terrible things to one another and played ugly pranks on humans. In exchange for divine favors, they demanded sacrifices. Now imagine how startling it would sound to hear that our God is not capricious, and he cannot be manipulated. Rather than playing "ugly pranks" on us, our God became one of us and died to rescue us from sin. Rather than a band of unruly children doing terrible things to one another, our God is a communion of love! His unity is so profound that while there are three persons, there is only ONE GOD! The invitation to love him brings with it a promise of great reward in the resurrection and a much better way to live human life in this age. In the Holy Spirit, our marriages make the wisdom of God, secret and hidden for so long, visible and tangible. We are to be a sign of contradiction to the wisdom of the rulers of this age!

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is our best experience of working together?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Dance to your wedding song.

There are many ways to say, “I love you.”

- “I thought about you many times today and always with a smile.”
- “I love you more each day.”
- “I really enjoy just being with you.”
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

Day Twenty-One

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Meditation

The Spirit brings freedom and transforms us from one degree of glory to another. But what does that mean? What does it look like practically? The best way to answer that is for us to look at the positive changes that have happened in our lives since we committed our marriage to Christ and invited the Holy Spirit to be more present in our lives and marriage. The glory we are looking for is the reflected glory of the life of the Trinity. Still too big an idea? Think about where you have seen more joy, more kindness, more peace, more gratitude. Have you avoided more arguments or harsh words? Has reconciliation been easier? That is what it means to be transformed from one degree of glory to another and it is a gift that comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was your favorite athletic activity? Was it a team or individual sport?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Dance to your wedding song.

There are many ways to say, “I love you.”

- “I thought about you many times today and always with a smile.”
- “I love you more each day.”
- “I really enjoy just being with you.”
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

You are altogether beautiful . . .

Adella had a cold and was not feeling well. Our grandchildren had spent part of the weekend with us and we were both tired. It was getting late and Adella was putting last week's newspapers in a brown paper bag so that we could put them in the recycling bin for the next day. She was almost finished when the bag ripped, and the newspapers spilled out. Her frustration boiled over and she exclaimed that these were terrible bags. I remained above the fray, but never being one to leave well enough alone I offered some ill-timed consoling words. The Holy Spirit was at work and we did not let the crummy bag cause more than a momentary disturbance.

Before we went to bed, I reminded her that we hadn't prayed yet. We had trouble agreeing on where to pray and she was still upset about the newspapers. My beautiful wife was quite the sight; red eyes, runny nose and a bunch of Kleenex. I opened our MIC manual and began to read, "you are altogether beautiful . . ." She didn't think it was as funny as I did. But we managed to have a very good time of prayer together. The next morning, I saw the doubled bag of newspapers and I smiled. As I picked up the bag to bring the papers to the recycling bin, it tore open and the papers spilled out. I burst out laughing at the wonderful irony of it all. I shared the story with Adella and we both thought that was just like the Holy Spirit to make us laugh and bring joy to our relationship.

What story would you tell this week?

Below is a list of topics for stories. Use this list to remind you of a change or a new state in your marriage. Perhaps your story will be based on something that happened last week. Or a favorite moment from a previous Marriage in Christ seminar or story you heard there. Or bright spots or highlights of the past week.

Acts of	Hope
Tenderness	Humor (positive)
Kindness	“I didn’t know that about you . . .”
Gentleness	Joy and laughter
Affection	Knowing more about each other
Attentiveness	Memories
Beginning new habits	“I remember how beautiful you were”
Bright spots	“I remember ‘seeing’ you for the first time”
Compliments	“I remember our wedding day”
Courage	New awareness of God, as Father, Jesus, Holy
Forgiveness and reconciliation	Spirit
Friendship	Pleasant surprises
Funny moments	Seeing each other in a new way
Generosity	Small changes
Good ideas we have adopted	Tenderness
Healing of old wounds	Living one life together

Day Twenty-Two

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 15:8-16

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

Meditation

Jesus calls us friends. Friends love the same things and reject the same things. Friends work together on common projects. The best of friends share one life with each other. Marriage is that sort of friendship. While it includes our passions, it surpasses mere erotic inclination, which, when selfishly pursued, fades wretchedly away. And because it includes the gift of our whole selves, including our bodies, to each other it is the most wonderful kind of friendship.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- If you could afford to live anywhere, would it be in a big city, small town or out in the country?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Sit in front of a crackling fire.

There are many ways to say, “I love you.”

- “I thought about you many times today and always with a smile.”
- “I love you more each day.”
- “I really enjoy just being with you.”
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

Day Twenty-There

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: 1 John 3:18-24

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹ And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; ²² and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴ All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Meditation

God is love and, in every love, there are always three things. There is one who loves, there is one who is loved and there is the love that unites them. In God, those three are not things they are persons. There is the Father, the source of all love, the Son who is the beloved of the Father and the Holy Spirit who is their love, so real that he is an actual divine person. If God were to be understood simply as absolute power, there would be no need for more than one person, for power can be exercised quite well by one person; but since God is understood as absolute love, he must be three. The gift of the Holy Spirit transforms our love as husband and wife. Our love now participates in and witnesses to the love of the Godhead. The wonder of it all is that love is also the most powerful force in the world.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What famous person would you like to invite to dinner? What would you serve?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Sit in front of a crackling fire.

There are many ways to say, “I love you.”

- “I thought about you many times today and always with a smile.”
- “I love you more each day.”
- “I really enjoy just being with you.”
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

Day Twenty-Four

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Ephesians 4:1-7

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷ But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Meditation

Paul the prisoner has learned a profound lesson through his suffering. The power to transform the world is to be found in unity. Notice how often the word “one” occurs in this passage. Our lives, our marriages are all about the unity of the Spirit. Why? Because God himself is One. The Trinity is a great mystery of course. How can one God actually be a community of three distinct persons? It is not possible to answer that question in a few short lines, but we can point to a sign that points in the right direction. That would be us, married folk. We are two distinct persons who are one. We make the mystery of the Trinity more accessible when we live a life worthy of our great calling. When we are filled with humility, gentleness, and patience, and are loving toward each other, we make God more visible in the world.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- Finish this sentence, what I love most about you is . . .

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Sit in front of a crackling fire.

There are many ways to say, “I love you.”

- “I thought about you many times today and always with a smile.”
- “I love you more each day.”
- “I really enjoy just being with you.”
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

Day Twenty-Five

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Meditation

St. Paul's great prayer is that our eyes be opened to what God the Father has in mind for us: unimaginable riches, the fullness of God himself. Through the gift of grace, which comes from the Holy Spirit, each of us entered into a "new life." It made us participants in a supernatural reality, in the divine life itself. Because of that we become a "dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit," a living temple of God. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to us and take up their abode with each of us and with the one new being which is our union as a married couple. Now, we participate in that divine communion in a new way. We live in God and by God. May we have the power to comprehend what it means to live "according to the Spirit," and "to be filled with all the fullness of God. "

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was your most successful New Year's resolution?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Sit in front of a crackling fire.

There are many ways to say "I love you"

- "I thought about you many times today and always with a smile."
- "I love you more each day."
- "I really enjoy just being with you."
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

Day Twenty-Six

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Romans 8:26-27

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.²⁷ And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Meditation

In our daily intercessory prayers, we talk to the Father as if he were one of our friends. We tell him what is on our mind and about whom we are concerned. I didn't realize how important it is to say these things out loud. I am always surprised by how much I learn about Adella and the Holy Spirit when I hear her prayer! One morning we were in a hurry and when it came time for the intentions I said, "The usual, Lord." There was a long silence next to me, followed by that "what are you doing" look. I said, "Oh, you want to mention the children by name, right?" She did. I realized that day that the Holy Spirit wanted to mention them all by name too!

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try one of these conversation starters.

- What do you remember about holding our child for the first time?
- What was the best thing you have created?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Sit in front of a crackling fire.

There are many ways to say “I love you”

- “I thought about you many times today and always with a smile.”
- “I love you more each day.”
- “I really enjoy just being with you.”
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

Day Twenty-Seven

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: 2 Peter 1:2-7

May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and **may become participants of the divine nature.** ⁵ For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love.

Meditation

The Holy Spirit transforms us and delights in sharing the divine life with us. In this way we participate in the mystery of the Incarnation. Since that is true, to see us, or to see our marriages is to catch a glimpse of the divine. What does that look like? Peter says it looks like our heroic efforts: to be good like God is good; to value knowledge in the face of a world that spurns reason and loves “fake news;” to practice self-control in a consumer culture that promotes excesses; to endure in a world enamored with comfort and ease; to strive for godliness in a secular world; to love with great affection and deep friendship in a world that commodifies human beings. In a world driven by the temporary and ephemeral, our marriage witnesses to God’s faithfulness to his promises made long ago.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Dance to your wedding song.

There are many ways to say “I love you”

- “I thought about you many times today and always with a smile.”
- “I love you more each day.”
- “I really enjoy just being with you.”
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

Day Twenty-Eight

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Proverbs 3:1-6

My child, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare they will give you. ³ Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and of people. ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Meditation

In the power of the Holy Spirit we have the strength to be faithful to the promises that we have made to each other. In our consumer culture commitments are, for the most, part temporary. Couples protect themselves from the inevitability of divorce with pre-nuptial agreements. *Our* witness is different. Our commitments are for a life-time. Our faithfulness to each other will be a cause for receiving favor in the eye of others, but more importantly, it will be a witness to the possibility and abundance of life that is lived in faithfulness. As the author of this Proverb says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” He will give us the grace, strength and wisdom to make loyalty visible and faithfulness attractive to the world. It is one of the amazing fruits of the Spirit. Pray for it daily.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who were your best friends as a child?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Make time to be together.

- Go shopping for groceries together.
- Ask your spouse, if you can help him/her.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Plan an evening away from the children.
- Dance to your wedding song.

There are many ways to say “I love you”

- “I thought about you many times today and always with a smile.”
- “I love you more each day.”
- “I really enjoy just being with you.”
- Be creative!

Build relationships with other couples.

- Play cards together or plan a card tournament with friends.
- Go to brunch after church service with another family.
- Invite several couples over for a potluck supper.
- Go out on a double date with friends.

How wearing ear plugs helped us

Adella was trimming the dogwood and harvesting some of the pretty twigs for Christmas decorations. I said that I had wanted to watch the Vikings football game. She figured that she had at least an hour and one-half, so the branches were spread out all over the front yard, which was also covered with leaves and the grass was too long.

The Vikings were doing poorly, so I decided to mow the front yard and pick up the leaves.

She was irked that I was invading her space, but we moved the branches out of the way – for the most part. I put in my earplugs and began mowing. However, I soon found out that the branches were still in the way. So I began to move them further off the lawn. Adella was by now really upset that I had invaded her space and time. I could tell that she was upset by the gestures and facial expressions. I could also tell that she was saying something. Now I can't hear as well as I used to, and with ear plugs in, I figured it was best that I couldn't hear. I heard the Holy Spirit say, don't respond right now. So I started the lawn mower and kept going. About five minutes later, I came near her. I caught her eye, winked and blew her a kiss – she burst out laughing and blew a kiss back. The next day we declared it was a bright spot. Life is really different now, and thank God for earplugs!

What story would you tell this week?

Below is a list of topics for stories. Use this list to remind you of a change or a new state in your marriage. Perhaps your story will be based on something that happened last week. Or a favorite moment from a previous Marriage in Christ seminar or story you heard there. Or bright spots or highlights of the past week.

Acts of	Hope
Tenderness	Humor (positive)
Kindness	“I didn’t know that about you . . .”
Gentleness	Joy and laughter
Affection	Knowing more about each other
Attentiveness	Memories
Beginning new habits	“I remember how beautiful you were”
Bright spots	“I remember ‘seeing’ you for the first time”
Compliments	“I remember our wedding day”
Courage	New awareness of God, as Father, Jesus, Holy
Forgiveness and reconciliation	Spirit
Friendship	Pleasant surprises
Funny moments	Seeing each other in a new way
Generosity	Small changes
Good ideas we have adopted	Tenderness
Healing of old wounds	Living one life together

Day Twenty-Nine

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Meditation

More than anything else, Paul longed for the small community in Philippi to be like Christ Jesus. It is clear from St. Paul's words that unity, living one life together is perhaps our highest goal. Why? Because that is the way in which we will witness to the world the great truth that God desires to live one life with us. It is in emptying ourselves as a couple that we will make God more visible and more present in the world. What does that look like? It looks like bringing meals to a sick friend, driving a relative to a doctor's appointment, inviting the neighbors over for dinner, watching your friends' children so they can have a date night, visiting friends in the hospital, shoveling snow or mowing the lawn for an elderly neighbor, to name just a few things. It is the way in which the Father can raise us up and give us a place with Jesus to the glory of the Father. That is the ultimate fruit of love, and our great joy.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What quality about your spouse do you most admire?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Have fun together.

- Listen to an audio book together. Do this on a long trip or for 15 minutes per day.
- Plan a date night and present the idea to your spouse.
- Play your favorite board game together.
- Work out/exercise together.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you!
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Day Thirty

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Titus 3:4-7

When the kindness and the generosity of God our savior appeared, He saved us not because of the righteous works which we performed, but, in accord with his own mercy, He saved us through a bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit which he poured out on us lavishly through Jesus Christ our savior, so that made righteous by the former's grace we might become heirs according to the hope of life eternal. (Translation: WCW)

Meditation

The kindness and generosity of God are visible in the person of Jesus the Christ who is our savior. The Greek word for generosity forms the root of the English word philanthropy. Kindness and the love of man, kindness and gifts of money can transform an institution. Great gifts make it possible to build libraries, hospitals and schools. Great gifts that can change an entire community, city, state or country. But imagine a gift that has the power to transform all of human history? A gift that makes it possible for the human race to escape the enslavement of sin and death. What do you call the gift that changes our very nature and allows us to become heirs, to become a member of God's own family? This gift of our rebirth and renewal is lavishly poured out through Jesus in our baptism. We have received another lavish gift at our wedding. We should open and use it.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What was the biggest surprise you ever pulled off?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Have fun together.

- Listen to an audio book together. Do this on a long trip or for 15 minutes per day.
- Plan a date night and present the idea to your spouse.
- Play your favorite board game together.
- Work out/exercise together.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you!
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Day Thirty-One

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: 1 Timothy 5:25

So also good works are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

Meditation

A single, simple verse offers a promise and a challenge to us. Goodness is visible in the same way that the beauty of creation is visible. Our good actions cannot be hidden, they will burst out even when we don't get or want credit. Consider the cumulative effect of a day's worth of simple acts of kindness: holding the door, allowing another driver to merge into traffic, saying thank you, or just smiling at a stranger. No one really notices, but it makes life better, more attractive. Now consider the impact on your neighborhood of daily acts of kindness, the witness of your marriage, the meals you bring to the sick neighbor, and your daily or weekly trips to worship together as a couple. All those good works are conspicuous and make our good God more visible in the world. They are like a stunning mountain vista, beautiful sunset, fields of wild flowers, spectacular white-water rivers rushing through canyons, or snowcapped mountains, which arrest us and take our breath away because of their beauty. So too should the goodness and beauty of our lives capture the imagination of a world hungry for the fruit of the Spirit. Our lives and our marriages are God's visible and attractive offer of a new way to live human life.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- How many times did you move when you were growing up? How did it affect you?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Have fun together.

- Listen to an audio book together. Do this on a long trip or for 15 minutes per day.
- Plan a date night and present the idea to your spouse.
- Play your favorite board game together.
- Work out/exercise together.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you!
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Day Thirty-Two

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Colossians 3:12-15, 17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. . . ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Meditation

Have you ever forgotten to pack anything for a vacation? I don't know how it is that despite my elaborate preparations and checklists, something always remains at home. One year my sandals waited patiently in the garage for my return. My swimsuit, underwear (twice), sunscreen, the camera, and binoculars have all excused themselves from a family vacation at one time or another. I have been able to survive without or, in the case of several of the above items, purchased new ones on vacation and salvaged the trip. However, when I forget to pack **kindness** the whole trip is in jeopardy. We usually notice that kindness is missing even before we get out of town. Five miles an hour on the freeway, with or without good air conditioning, car exhaust, inconsiderate drivers (not me of course), a cranky, over tired child or spouse (again not me!), all manage to find the one nerve that has remained intact from the packing and planning and they all stand on that remaining nerve. And at that moment, I don't even think about kindness. Fortunately, forgiveness is the perfect antidote for lack of kindness. Better still is being in tune with the Holy Spirit would help us be able to tell a story about how we avoided the need for forgiveness in the first place!

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What makes it difficult for you to trust in God?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Have fun together.

- Listen to an audio book together. Do this on a long trip or for 15 minutes per day.
- Plan a date night and present the idea to your spouse.
- Play your favorite board game together.
- Work out/exercise together.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you!
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Day Thirty-Three

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading Ephesians 4:1-6

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Meditation

The love, that is the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, draws us as a couple into a life-long friendship of deep affection, mutual self-giving and joy. It is a genuine, full, rich, passionate, fun, and very human love that has been purified and disciplined in the context of our lifelong commitment in marriage. At some point early on in our relationship with our spouse, perhaps while we were dating, we caught a glimpse of how God sees her/him. That glimpse of the person is at the very heart of the love that captured us. It aroused our passions and moved us to seek to know him/her better, to give ourselves to her/him more. Remembering that glimpse or seeing it anew moves us all over again. Often, though, over time, in our busy lives or because of conflicts, that glimpse no longer shapes how we see our relationship. It fades as we go into auto pilot or cruise control. And sadly, all we see is this ordinary person whom we live with and may not even know any more. We see more clearly the little things that he does, or she does that just irk us. Left untended those little irks grow and fester and we can fall out of love. But we can choose to see our beloved through the eyes of the Holy Spirit who is in us.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your favorite picnic memory? What is your favorite picnic spot?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Have fun together.

- Listen to an audio book together. Do this on a long trip or for 15 minutes per day.
- Plan a date night and present the idea to your spouse.
- Play your favorite board game together.
- Work out/exercise together.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you!
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Day Thirty-Four

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Meditation

Near the end of his great letter to the Christian community in Rome, Paul was overcome with love for these brothers and sisters who were living in the shadow of the imperial power of Rome. Perhaps they could see the Palatine Hill, Caesar's home right across the Tiber River. Perhaps they felt a quickening in their heart every time Paul called Jesus, Lord and Savior – titles that Caesar had coopted for himself. After all, it was treasonous to say those things out loud. But for Paul there was no doubt in how the long story of humanity would end. This prayer burst from his heart. He prayed that the God of hope would fill them with joy and peace. Joy and peace that comes from believing our story will end well. Hope allows us to live now in great joy and in peace, because in the power of the Holy Spirit we have a confidence that is not available to those who rely on their own power, their own strength. Today, rejoice with Paul and the community in Rome. Rejoice with all of creation because the Lord is faithful to his promises.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your earliest childhood memory?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Have fun together.

- Listen to an audio book together. Do this on a long trip or for 15 minutes per day.
- Plan a date night and present the idea to your spouse.
- Play your favorite board game together.
- Work out/exercise together.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you!
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Day Thirty-Five

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³ And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Meditation

St. Paul and those first Christians saw that they had to live in the Roman world, but because they proclaimed that Jesus was the true Lord of the world and lived as if that were true, they were soon to be at odds with it. Marriage and family life, by the Romans' own admission, were not going well either. Divorce was easy. Low birth rates for the aristocratic classes had prompted Augustine to promulgate laws that would encourage the upper class to have more children or punish them if they did not. It was to a world that was in crisis that a radical and revolutionary message was proclaimed. Life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the context of a Christian community held out the promise of a different, better, freer, more human way of life in this age and in the age to come.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What is your favorite poem? How much of it can you recite?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Have fun together.

- Listen to an audio book together. Do this on a long trip or for 15 minutes per day.
- Plan a date night and present the idea to your spouse.
- Play your favorite board game together.
- Work out/exercise together.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you!
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

The Holy Spirit in ordinary life

I normally make breakfast for both of us. One day I was in a hurry to get to the office and Adella was not working that day. I was hoping that she would make breakfast for me. But rather than ask her for help, I decided to see if she would recognize my need, drop what she was doing and fix breakfast for me/us. I knew that she would have gladly fixed breakfast, if I had only asked. But, I must confess, it was a bit of a test. And I knew deep down that it was a completely unfair, unreasonable and frankly selfish test on my part. It was not my finest morning.

I emerged from the bedroom, dressed and ready for work. When I went to the kitchen I found that she had not read my mind and was understandably working on her own project—actually, she was praying. When she saw the look on my face, she had a suspicion that she had been set up and was being tested. That was mixed with a little bit of a conviction that she had not offered to make breakfast. In the past, she might have been offended that I would presume she could read my mind, or had taken her kindness for granted. She might also have felt a little guilty for not being attentive to my needs. When she saw that I was working my way into “righteous indignation” the moment was fraught with danger for us. Would it be a sharp response or a cold angry silence?

She looked at me and said, “What’s the matter?”

I said, “I thought you would make my breakfast.”

Something wonderful happened in her. She was filled with the Holy Spirit. She didn’t react either way. Instead of cold silence or an angry response, she felt a little bit impish and with a completely disarming look, that could only have come from the Holy Spirit, she said,

“Why?”

One word, one look, her love and the love of the Holy Spirit brought me up short and revealed my selfishness. In the past, I would have taken offense where there was none. I might have pouted and thought of how often I fixed her breakfast, do I always have to point out my needs? Keeping score and expecting her to read my mind are terrible things to do to the love of my life. And before the MIC seminar I might have chosen all of the above as my response.

But that morning I heard in her simple response and the pleasant look on her face, the Holy Spirit asking me the same question, “Why? Why did you set her up to fail that little test?” In that moment, I saw how wrong I was. I repented quickly and we both burst out laughing, the “all of the above” became “none of the above” for both of us.

What story would you tell this week?

Below is a list of topics for stories. Use this list to remind you of a change or a new state in your marriage. Perhaps your story will be based on something that happened last week. Or a favorite moment from a previous Marriage in Christ seminar or story you heard there. Or bright spots or highlights of the past week.

Acts of	Hope
Tenderness	Humor (positive)
Kindness	“I didn’t know that about you . . .”
Gentleness	Joy and laughter
Affection	Knowing more about each other
Attentiveness	Memories
Beginning new habits	“I remember how beautiful you were”
Bright spots	“I remember ‘seeing’ you for the first time”
Compliments	“I remember our wedding day”
Courage	New awareness of God, as Father, Jesus, Holy
Forgiveness and reconciliation	Spirit
Friendship	Pleasant surprises
Funny moments	Seeing each other in a new way
Generosity	Small changes
Good ideas we have adopted	Tenderness
Healing of old wounds	Living one life together

Day Thirty-Six

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Song of Solomon 4:1-7

How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, moving down the slopes of Gilead. ² Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them is bereaved. ³ Your lips are like a crimson thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. ⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David, built in courses; on it hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors. ⁵ Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that feed among the lilies. ⁶ Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. ⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.

Meditation

Our sexuality is a great gift from God. Holy sex, the kind that is found only in the marriage of one man with one woman, is different from the gratuitous, casual sexual encounters that are the stuff of most modern entertainment. Erotic love is not a problem; rather, it is a great gift as is evidenced by the beautiful description of the beloved in today's poem. Sex outside of marriage gives sex a bad name. Erotic love, romantic love was designed by the Creator to be a delight for the husband and wife. It was designed to deepen the gift of self that is at the heart of marital friendship.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What is your favorite summer time activity?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Say nice things about your spouse in front of him/her and your friends.
- Express your love for who your spouse is not just what he/she does.

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Make acts of kindness a daily ritual of connection.

- Say, “good-bye, I love” you when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.
- Make a cup of your spouse's favorite beverage.
- Fill up his/her tank with gas.

Day Thirty-Seven

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Genesis 2:15-25

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man¹ there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman,¹ for out of Man² this one was taken." ²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Meditation

The story is set in the Garden where God dwells with the man and the man with God. However, after the good, good, very good of the first story, God's announcement that it is **NOT GOOD** for the man to be alone is jarring. God announces that he will solve the problem by making a helper for the man. So, he caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. The deep sleep was more like a trance or a dream than the anesthesia that would be needed for major surgery. In the dream the Lord revealed that a new person was being fashioned from his side. The word "rib" indicates more than a bone, it is the whole side of the man. Out of that side, God fashions another person. This one is female. When the two become one, the unity of humanity is restored. It is not the soul mate of Greek mythology where two halves of an originally conjoined whole search the created world longing to find each other and become whole again. Rather, it is the longing for unity that is most profoundly expressed in the complementarity of male and female. It is a subversion of the myth of a soul mate. Human beings are designed to be in relationship. One humanity had become two distinct persons, now two persons become one image of the Creator who fashioned them in his own likeness.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your favorite souvenir?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Say nice things about your spouse in front of him/her and your friends.
- Express your love for who your spouse is not just what he/she does.

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Make acts of kindness a daily ritual of connection.

- Say, “good-bye, I love” you when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.
- Make a cup of your spouse's favorite beverage.
- Fill up his/her tank with gas.

Day Thirty-Eight

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Hosea 2:13-15 23

I will punish her for the festival days of the Baals, when she offered incense to them and decked herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, says the LORD. ¹⁴ Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵ From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

Meditation

In this, one of the tenderest passages in all of the Scriptures, the Lord speaks of luring his wayward wife out into the wilderness. There he would renew the experience of Exodus. Freedom again! What a great day! God and his people would be in love as in the early days of their relationship. They would drink the heady wine of young and passionate love. Only this time it will last forever. The covenant will be restored, creation healed and there will be peace in the land. All that had gone wrong in Genesis 3 will be put right - and more!

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your favorite day of the week? Why?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Say nice things about your spouse in front of him/her and your friends.
- Express your love for who your spouse is not just what he/she does.

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Make acts of kindness a daily ritual of connection.

- Say, “good-bye, I love” you when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.
- Make a cup of your spouse's favorite beverage.
- Fill up his/her tank with gas.

Day Thirty-Nine

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Hosea 2:16-23

¹⁶ On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, "My husband," and no longer will you call me, "My Baal."¹⁷ For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more. ¹⁸ I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish² the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. ¹⁹ And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. ²⁰ I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD. ²¹ On that day I will answer, says the LORD, I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth; ²² and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel;¹ ²³ and I will sow him¹ for myself in the land. And I will have pity on Lo-ruhamah,² and I will say to Lo-ammi,³ "You are my people"; and he shall say, "You are my God."

Meditation

Marriage, and by extension our relationship with God, is not about ownership or slavery. On the day that the Lord restores the marriage contract it will be about love not ownership. His people will be rescued from slavery once again. This time the slavery is subservience to a false god – Baal. The interesting thing about this phrase is that “Baal” in addition to being the name of the Canaanite god, also means “husband, lord or master.” The Hebrew phrase we find here is “*Baali*” which means “my lord/master/husband.” The Lord says that rather than calling him lord/master/husband, the name of a false god and tyrant, we will call him *’ishi* “my husband.” The new name is that of a trusted friend, partner and in the Genesis 2 creation story, an equal. The husband-wife image is not that of master-slave. It is tender, intimate and ultimately is intended to evoke the freedom of Exodus and the dignity of one who is deeply loved. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt, and in that day, says the lord, you will call me, "my husband," and no longer will you call me, "My Baal."

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who was your favorite teacher in grade school or high school?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Say nice things about your spouse in front of him/her and your friends.
- Express your love for who your spouse is not just what he/she does.

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Make acts of kindness a daily ritual of connection.

- Say, “good-bye, I love you” when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.
- Make a cup of your spouse's favorite beverage.
- Fill up his/her tank with gas.

Day Forty

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. ³ And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? ⁵ And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. ⁶ I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. ⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!

Meditation

A waring inside a love song reminds us that covenants are serious business: God's with us, ours with God, ours as spouses because so much is at stake. Symbolic value, human value, justice, care for the poor, raising families, having internal realities match external practice. It is for keeps. It is the story of reality. God has invested marriage with much value. Getting our priorities wrong, not having God first is a huge problem. What flows from that first relationship is a rightly ordered marriage and family and what flows from that is a rightly ordered society that brings God's wise and loving care to creation and especially to the poor. It is a society that reflects the interests and loves of the Creator God himself.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your favorite birthday memory?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Say nice things about your spouse in front of him/her and your friends.
- Express your love for who your spouse is not just what he/she does.

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Make acts of kindness a daily ritual of connection.

- Say, “good-bye, I love” you when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.
- Make a cup of your spouse's favorite beverage.
- Fill up his/her tank with gas.

Day Forty-One

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt -- a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Meditation

This is a story of a broken covenant and a spurned husband. If it were like so many modern “love stories” the husband would look for love with another woman. But this husband had made an ancient promise to be faithful to his bride, even if she were to be unfaithful. He loves his bride so much that he will make a new unbreakable covenant with her. It will be unbreakable because it will be written on her heart and based on love. “To know” one’s spouse is a polite euphemism for the tender sexual embrace of a husband and wife in marriage. It is the best human analogy for the tender, intimate, personal love of God for us. In the Holy Spirit, our love for each other, our fidelity and our openness to life function as signs pointing to the great love of Christ for the Church. He is the husband who is faithful—in good times and bad, for rich or for poor, in sickness and health. God never, ever, gives up on us.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was your first job? How much did you get paid? Did you like it?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone:

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!)
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.
- Take the children on an outing so your spouse has time just for himself/herself.

Learn/try something new together.

- Attend a class (through community ed).
- Take dance lessons.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Watch a TED talk.

Day Forty-Two

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Ezekiel 36:21-28

But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came. ²² Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴ I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. ²⁸ Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Meditation

We sometimes forget that God's reputation is at stake in our marriage. Not only are we as individuals made in the image and likeness of God, but our marriage carries a tremendous signage responsibility. We participate in the great mystery of making Christ's love for his bride the Church more visible and understandable. We are also responsible for making the mystery of the Trinity a bit more understandable. We are, after all, one new being and two distinct persons at the same time. That responsibility would be far too great for us, except for the great promise of our God to put his own spirit in our hearts. He will renew his covenant with us, he will give us the grace and strength to be his witnesses in the world. He will be our God and we his people. Ask every day to be more aware of his great love and fidelity. He will make his name great and he will do it through us.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What do you remember about your first day of school/work?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone:

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!)
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.
- Take the children on an outing so your spouse has time just for himself/herself.

Learn/try something new together.

- Attend a class (through community ed).
- Take dance lessons.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Watch a TED talk.

Unity and Joy

One time, during the fourth week of the Marriage in Christ seminar, Bill and I prayed to see the Holy Spirit more clearly and to experience more unity. We have experienced both since then. We have a room that was once a home office/library. But over time it had become the space that caught everything we didn't know what to do with. It had extra dining room chairs, piles of papers, multiple versions of MIC manuals and piles of books on marriage. In that room, two walls are covered with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. They are filled with books that Bill uses in his biblical studies. But the collection had grown, and books were spilling off the shelves.

I have been wanting to clean and reorganize that room for some time, but we never have been able to get to it. Bill surprised me one Saturday morning by asking if I wanted to help him clean the study. Trying to hide my excitement, I said, "yes, let's start on the closet." Bill said, "No, we can't tackle the closet." It was clear we had different agendas of where to start. Now I had to make a decision, get upset, because I wanted to do the closet first, which would have led to a disagreement and made the day unpleasant or graciously follow his lead. Actually, a few years ago, I would have just started on the closet and let him do his own thing. The choice was, do it my way or choose unity. I chose unity, I wanted to work together. We worked together, dusting books, going through important papers, shredding old files, setting aside books for Goodwill, and generally putting the room into order. At the end of the day we both realized that had we started with the closet we would not have finished the task. I was blessed because while I see details and know how I want it to be in the end, Bill often sees a bigger picture and he has energy to start projects. I enjoy doing the project and putting on finishing touches. Our gifts complemented each other that day. Now we can look forward to working together on another project – the closet!

I experienced the Holy Spirit at work, deepening my affection for Bill and filling me with more joy and peace.

What story would you tell this week?

Below is a list of topics for stories. Use this list to remind you of a change or a new state in your marriage. Perhaps your story will be based on something that happened last week. Or a favorite moment from a previous Marriage in Christ seminar or story you heard there. Or bright spots or highlights of the past week.

Acts of	Hope
Tenderness	Humor (positive)
Kindness	“I didn’t know that about you . . .”
Gentleness	Joy and laughter
Affection	Knowing more about each other
Attentiveness	Memories
Beginning new habits	“I remember how beautiful you were”
Bright spots	“I remember ‘seeing’ you for the first time”
Compliments	“I remember our wedding day”
Courage	New awareness of God, as Father, Jesus, Holy
Forgiveness and reconciliation	Spirit
Friendship	Pleasant surprises
Funny moments	Seeing each other in a new way
Generosity	Small changes
Good ideas we have adopted	Tenderness
Healing of old wounds	Living one life together

Day Forty-Three

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Song of Solomon 1:1-4

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. ² Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine, ³ your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is perfume poured out; therefore the maidens love you. ⁴ Draw me after you, let us make haste. The king has brought me into his chambers. We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you.

Meditation

One of the Fathers of the Church saw in this passage the longing prayer of each human heart. We are the Bride who says to the Father of the Bridegroom, “How long is my Bridegroom going to send kisses by Moses and kisses by the prophets? Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!” The Father of the Bridegroom heard the plea of the Bride and agreed to send his Son. The Holy Spirit then says to the Bride, to each of us, “the Bridegroom is coming, open your hearts and prepare a place for him.” The Bridegroom arrives and seals his love for each of us with the kiss of the Holy Spirit, a kiss far better than wine.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who is your favorite artist? What do you like about his/her work?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone:

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!)
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.
- Take the children on an outing so your spouse has time just for himself/herself.

Learn/try something new together.

- Attend a class (through community ed).
- Take dance lessons.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Watch a TED talk.

Day Forty-Four

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-9

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

Meditation

As I get older I can relate a little bit better with the thousand years like a day part – time does go quickly. It is as the Scriptures say, “fleeting.” The part that, not to my credit, is very difficult is the one day is like a thousand years part. I’ve had days that seem that long, haven’t you? Not just days, but those long stretches of time when the baby is colicky, your children struggle with serious illness, or your parents are slowly and painfully nearing death. It appears that Peter understood that as well. He understood the temptation to fall back into old habits, to be unkind, to stop trying so hard, to wonder why it has to be this hard. God’s sense of time is so much different than ours. His patience is infinite, and his desire is to give us all enough time to return to him. With the help of the Holy Spirit we can see God’s bigger purpose and practice the virtue of hope.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What is your favorite holiday tradition? What tradition would you like to start?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone.

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!)
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.
- Take the children on an outing so your spouse has time just for himself/herself.

Learn/try something new together.

- Attend a class (through community ed).
- Take dance lessons.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Watch a TED talk.

Day Forty-Five

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Reading: Psalm 19:1-4

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; ⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Meditation

Creation reflects God's glory for all to see. Think about your favorite sunset or sunrise. Recall the most beautiful mountain, valley, river, lake, ocean, park, flower, change of color in the spring and fall, tropical flowers, colorful birds, and majestic animals. The overwhelming variety and beauty of the created world is a mere reflection of the infinite beauty and splendor of the author of that beauty. Reflect on that glimpse and allow yourself to be moved.

The psalmist says that the voiceless creation proclaims out loud God's glory and splendor. Now consider how the one creature with a voice can proclaim the creator's glory with words, songs, and symbols. The Holy Spirit joins with us to help our marriages make that glory visible in a world that appears to be tone-deaf and blind.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What was your favorite family vacation?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Start or reinforce family traditions.

- Celebrate birthdays.
- Make special plans for your next wedding anniversary.
- Start a tradition!

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone.

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.
- To greet each other warmly when you return home, get up from the computer, TV, reading or whatever you are doing.

Don't take each other for granted.

- Surprise your spouse with something new or something that you used to do, e.g., hold hands in church.
- Play your spouse's favorite music while you are making dinner together.
- Express your appreciation for your spouse's good qualities.
- Say good morning and good night.
- On Fridays, sit together and reflect on the best part of your week so far.

Day Forty-Six

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Scripture: Matthew 19:4-6

Jesus answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Meditation

According to Jesus, who knew what was on his Father's mind better than anyone, the Creator's original plan was precisely that human beings, gendered and together as male and female be the image and likeness of God. Jesus also believed that it was his Father's intention that husband and wife become one new being. Their unity expressed and created by the act of intercourse would fulfill the Creator's desire for more human persons made in his image and likeness. More persons to share in his life and love. Jesus also saw that this union, expressed in their commitment to one another and in the physical act of intercourse was also the act of God joining them together. For Jesus this union was to last a lifetime. Jesus was confident that in him and with the Holy Spirit it was possible to live this new life.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

- Who is your favorite writer/author/columnist?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Start or reinforce family traditions.

- Celebrate birthdays.
- Make special plans for your next wedding anniversary.
- Start a tradition!

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone.

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.
- Greet each other warmly when you return home, get up from the computer, TV, reading or whatever you are doing.

Don't take each other for granted.

- Surprise your spouse with something new or something that you used to do, e.g., hold hands in church.
- Play your spouse's favorite music while you are making dinner together.
- Express your appreciation for your spouse's good qualities.
- Say good morning and good night.
- On Fridays, sit together and reflect on the best part of your week so far.

Day Forty-Seven

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28, 31; 2:1-2

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." ²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. ^{2:1} Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

Meditation

The Hebrew words for "image and likeness" suggest the images or statues of kings that populated the ancient world. If a sovereign could not be present in the remote parts of his kingdom, he would erect a statue of himself. No one would confuse the statue for the king, but everyone would be reminded of the king (and who was in charge) when they looked at the statue. In making the statue the king would, in effect say, "I am present in the far flung reaches of my kingdom." Human beings make God the creator present in the world in which he dwells – his sacred space.

Israel had been given a strict command not to make images or statues of their God. Rather, the image and likeness of the living God, the creator of the world was human persons. Notice that God said, "Let **us** make humankind in **our** image according to **our** likeness and let **them** have dominion." It was God's idea to create a community of persons, male and female persons, to be his image and likeness. Note the male-female complementarity. Note the marriage imagery implicit in the command to be fruitful and fill the earth. Marriage, the union of male and female, reflects God in a unique way. Husbands and wives become fathers and mothers and participate with God in the extraordinary task of being co-creators of more human beings. One of the great joys and purposes of marriage is to have children. It is the creation blessing that was not washed away by the flood (Genesis 9:1). It is difficult, but wonderful.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- In what situations are you most likely to procrastinate?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Start or reinforce family traditions.

- Celebrate birthdays.
- Make special plans for your next wedding anniversary.
- Start a tradition!

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone.

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.
- Greet each other warmly when you return home, get up from the computer, TV, reading or whatever you are doing.

Don't take each other for granted.

- Surprise your spouse with something new or something that you used to do, e.g., hold hands in church.
- Play your spouse's favorite music while you are making dinner together.
- Express your appreciation for your spouse's good qualities.
- Say good morning and good night.
- On Fridays, sit together and reflect on the best part of your week so far.

Day Forty-Eight

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Scripture: Isaiah 54:4-8

Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the disgrace of your widowhood you will remember no more. ⁵ For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. ⁶ For the LORD has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like the wife of a man's youth when she is cast off, says your God. ⁷ For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you. ⁸ In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer.

Meditation

The tender and intimate images of married love are used to describe the relationship of God and his covenant people. The heart-wrenching images of marital infidelity reveal the true nature of idolatry. Marriage also supplies the images to understand not only what the relationship of God and his people is like now, but how it holds the promise of our deepest hopes for the future as well. The long-awaited day of the Lord will come and will be a celebration of the wedding of the Lord and his beloved. On that day the weapons of war will be abolished, the land will pour forth grain, wine and oil. Our enemies will be defeated, those in need of pity will be pitied and those who were not God's people will be his people and he will be their God.

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- If you could only recommend one book, what would it be? We will grant you the Bible, so try another one!

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Start or reinforce family traditions.

- Celebrate birthdays.
- Make special plans for your next wedding anniversary.
- Start a tradition!

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone.

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.
- Greet each other warmly when you return home, get up from the computer, TV, reading or whatever you are doing.

Don't take each other for granted.

- Surprise your spouse with something new or something that you used to do, e.g., hold hands in church.
- Play your spouse's favorite music while you are making dinner together.
- Express your appreciation for your spouse's good qualities.
- Say good morning and good night.
- On Fridays, sit together and reflect on the best part of your week so far.

Day Forty-Nine

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-3

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Meditation

For Jesus, marriage was a key metaphor for the kingdom of God. It spoke of the faithfulness of his father to the covenant, the marriage of one God to his chosen people. It was permanent, and now that Israel's long exile was ending, the old decree of divorce that represented the shame of Israel and her folly of going after false gods was being torn up. The bridegroom was at hand and it was time for his wedding feast. The Holy Spirit announced that this day would come, and when it did it would be a great party, an everlasting party!

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What was the worst, most frightening weather event you experienced?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Start or reinforce family traditions.

- Celebrate birthdays.
- Make special plans for your next wedding anniversary.
- Start a tradition!

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone.

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.
- Greet each other warmly when you return home, get up from the computer, TV, reading or whatever you are doing.

Don't take each other for granted.

- Surprise your spouse with something new or something that you used to do, e.g., hold hands in church.
- Play your spouse's favorite music while you are making dinner together.
- Express your appreciation for your spouse's good qualities.
- Say good morning and good night.
- On Fridays, sit together and reflect on the best part of your week so far.

Day Fifty

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Revelation 22:17

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

Meditation

Marriage is vitally important because it holds out to a deeply troubled world the hope and promise of love. It stands as a symbol of God's intention for a renewed heaven and earth. It stands a symbol of the intimate relationship of God and his people, both now and to come. Marriage is a symbol of the profound unity and oneness with himself that he has in store for his bride. Marriage is also a tangible symbol of the risk that the Creator has taken in joining himself to us. It is very easy to see God as a distant, all powerful, unmoved mover of the universe, yet if the Scriptures are to be believed, that is not the whole truth. God, who is passionately in love with us invites us, to the wedding feast. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."

Quiet meditation: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love, the more we love the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What is your favorite memory of being with your grandparents?

Act

Regardless of the feelings of the moment, we have the power to do acts of love that will become habits of love.

Try one of these today:

Start or reinforce family traditions.

- Celebrate birthdays.
- Make special plans for your next wedding anniversary.
- Start a tradition!

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone.

- To embrace and kiss.
- To take time to tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.
- Greet each other warmly when you return home, get up from the computer, TV, reading or whatever you are doing.

Don't take each other for granted.

- Surprise your spouse with something new or something that you used to do, e.g., hold hands in church.
- Play your spouse's favorite music while you are making dinner together.
- Express your appreciation for your spouse's good qualities.
- Say good morning and good night.
- On Fridays, sit together and reflect on the best part of your week so far.

Don't try this at home.

Each time we host the Marriage in Christ seminar we grow a little bit, we get to see the Holy Spirit at work in our marriage and in our life a little more. Not only that, but we get to see how the Lord can use the seminar to transform our lives and marriage. I want to preface this by saying “don't try this at home, we are trained professionals” – but we are not! We are just an ordinary couple trying to love each other.

The night before we were to lead the fourth week prayer service, we took Gary Chapman's five love languages quiz. I had the bright idea to answer it first for ourselves, then answer it the way we thought the other would. We both thought it would be fun. When we compared lists, what we thought the other would say, matched very closely to what the other actually said. That is the good news. We know each other very well.

The more difficult part of the experience happened when I realized that she would most likely never be fluent in my preferred way of experiencing/receiving love which is to give and receive words of affirmation. I often say something nice/loving to her, and then wait for her to say something nice/loving back. When she doesn't I would get frustrated. After 43 years, I knew that about her and thought I had come to a measure of peace about it earlier in this seminar. But when I saw that words of affirmation were very low on her list, it hit me in a new way that she would most likely never express her love for me in the way I would like. The evil one took that as his cue to tempt me with the thought that she really doesn't love me.

That bothered me and, quite honestly, I was sad. It did not become the old harmful silent treatment, but she noticed that I had become quieter than usual. What started out as a fun little exercise became – what often happens when we host a seminar – a story about reconciliation. To make a long story shorter, I didn't feel much like leading a prayer service the next night.

The next morning, I knew we had to reconcile and be unified, both to set a good example and to be genuine when we led the prayer service. I also knew that I had to get over my problem and repent.

Two things happened. First, I spent some time in personal prayer and I heard the Lord very clearly say to me that a husband has to “go all in” first. He said that I had to be willing to die for her, and not force her to express her love for me, my way.

Second, she made breakfast for us that morning. Acts of service are her number one way of expressing and experiencing love. While she was making breakfast, I heard the Holy Spirit ask me, “what is she saying to you right now?” I said, “she is saying, ‘I love you.’”

Since then, we have been practicing expressing love in each other's “language.” I taught Latin for a lot of years, and it has been fun to try to think of this process of learning a new language as needing a dictionary, a grammar, and lessons from each other.

What story would you tell this week?

Below is a list of topics for stories. Use this list to remind you of a change or a new state in your marriage. Perhaps your story will be based on something that happened last week. Or a favorite moment from a previous Marriage in Christ seminar or story you heard there. Or bright spots or highlights of the past week.

Acts of	Hope
Tenderness	Humor (positive)
Kindness	“I didn’t know that about you . . .”
Gentleness	Joy and laughter
Affection	Knowing more about each other
Attentiveness	Memories
Beginning new habits	“I remember how beautiful you were”
Bright spots	“I remember ‘seeing’ you for the first time”
Compliments	“I remember our wedding day”
Courage	New awareness of God, as Father, Jesus, Holy
Forgiveness and reconciliation	Spirit
Friendship	Pleasant surprises
Funny moments	Seeing each other in a new way
Generosity	Small changes
Good ideas we have adopted	Tenderness
Healing of old wounds	Living one life together