

Marriage Matters: Love in Action

A Couples Reconnect CORE Presentation for March 2026 (Lenten Season)

Can be presented by Husband/Wife taking turns, or single presenter such as a Priest or Deacon

OPENING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Presenter: Let us begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Loving God, during this Lenten season of conversion and renewal, we gather as couples seeking to deepen our love through action. Help us to follow Christ's example of humble service. Open our hearts to see the daily opportunities to wash each other's feet. May our marriages become living witnesses of Your sacrificial love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

ICE BREAKER (10 minutes)

Presenter: Welcome everyone! Let's go around the room. Please introduce yourselves by saying "I am [name] and this is my husband/wife [name]," then answer:

"What's one small thing your spouse did this week that made you smile?"

(Keep answers to 30 seconds per couple and presenter begins as the example.)

PRESENTATION: Love in Action (20 minutes)

Part 1: Love Beyond Words (5 minutes)

Presenter 1/Husband: We live in a culture obsessed with the spectacular. Social media shows us elaborate proposals, anniversary trips to Paris, perfectly staged date nights. But here's what my life experience has taught me: the couples posting the most aren't always the ones loving the most.

Real love? It happens at 6 AM when you quietly make the coffee because you know your spouse had a rough night. It happens when you bite your tongue instead of saying

"I told you so." It happens when you choose to see the person you married, not the person who's irritating you right now.

St. John tells us: "Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Notice he doesn't say love with actions *instead* of words—we need both. But actions authenticate our words. They're the proof that love isn't just something we feel; it's something we choose.

During Lent, we're called to conversion—to turn our hearts back to God. What if we also turned our hearts back to our spouse? What if these forty days became forty opportunities to love more deliberately?

Presenter 2/Wife: The statistics tell a sobering story. Marriages where spouses regularly perform small acts of kindness are five times more likely to be described as "very happy." Think about that—not expensive gifts, not exotic vacations—small acts of kindness. A cup of tea brought without being asked. A quick shoulder rub after a long day. A genuine "how are you?" with eye contact.

But here's the statistic that stopped me cold: emotional neglect—not big fights, not dramatic betrayals—emotional neglect is the number one predictor of divorce. It's the slow fade of two people living parallel lives in the same house. Going through motions without emotion. Being married without being connected.

Yet there's hope: couples who share even a brief spiritual practice together—saying grace, praying before bed, reading scripture—reduce their risk of divorce by nearly 30%. Why? Because when you invite God into your marriage, you're admitting it's bigger than both of you. You're anchoring your love in something eternal.

Part 2: The Master Class in Love (7 minutes)

Presenter 1/Husband: On Holy Thursday, hours before His passion, Jesus did something that shocked His disciples. The Gospel of John tells us: "He rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet" (John 13:4-5).

Picture this scene. The Creator of the universe kneeling on a dirt floor. The hands that shaped galaxies now handling dusty, calloused feet. This wasn't symbolic—it was sweaty, messy, humbling work. The kind of job reserved for the lowest servant.

Peter protests: "You will never wash my feet!" He gets it—this is all wrong. The Master doesn't serve the student. The Lord doesn't kneel before His subjects. But Jesus insists: "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me" (John 13:8).

Here's what Jesus is teaching: love that doesn't humble itself isn't love—it's pride wearing a mask. Love that won't get messy isn't love—it's a performance. Love that keeps score of who serves whom isn't love—it's a business transaction.

Presenter 2/Wife: When Jesus finished washing their feet—including Judas, who would betray Him within hours—He asked them: "Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:12-14).

This wasn't just for the apostles. This was for us, sitting here tonight, wondering how to make our marriages work in 2026. Jesus is saying: "Want to know what love looks like? It looks like service. It looks like sacrifice. It looks like choosing the other's good over your own comfort."

In marriage, we wash each other's feet every day—or we don't. When your husband is overwhelmed with work stress, and you take on extra household duties without keeping score—you're washing his feet. When your wife is exhausted from caring for aging parents, and you cancel your plans to simply be present—you're washing her feet.

The beautiful paradox? In kneeling to serve, we actually rise. In giving ourselves away, we find ourselves. In washing feet, our own hearts are cleansed.

Part 3: Ten Ways to Live Love in Action (8 minutes)

[Presenters alternate reading these, adding personal examples]

1. Choose Presence Over Distraction How many evenings have we sat in the same room but different worlds? Your spouse doesn't need your perfect attention all the time, but they need your full attention some of the time. Put the phone in a drawer during dinner. Look up when they walk in. Five minutes of real presence beats an hour of half-listening.

2. Say Thank You Daily "Thank you for making dinner." "Thank you for working hard for our family." "Thank you for being patient with my mother." Gratitude is like compound interest in marriage—small deposits grow into wealth over time. And here's the secret: the more you thank your spouse, the more you'll notice to be thankful for.

3. Do One Small Act of Service a Day Fill their gas tank. Make their favorite breakfast. Handle the chore they hate. St. Thérèse of Lisieux called this "the little way"—finding sanctity in small acts done with great love. Your marriage doesn't need grand gestures; it needs faithful service.

4. Speak Life, Not Criticism Words create worlds. "You're such a good father" builds; "You never help with the kids" destroys. This doesn't mean avoiding hard conversations, but it means leading with love. During Lent, what if we fasted from criticism and feasted on encouragement?

5. Sacrifice Comfort for Care Love often means choosing the harder thing. Getting up with the baby so your spouse can sleep. Watching their show instead of yours. Going to their family gathering when you'd rather stay home. Every sacrifice is a deposit in the bank of trust.

6. Practice Daily Encouragement Be your spouse's biggest cheerleader. Notice their efforts, not just their achievements. "I saw how patient you were with the kids today." "I'm proud of how you handled that difficult client." Everyone faces enough criticism in the world—home should be where we're built up.

7. Pray or Reflect Together Even 30 seconds of shared prayer changes everything. Hold hands and say one Our Father before bed. Share one thing you're grateful for. Ask God to bless your spouse. When you pray together, you're admitting your marriage needs grace—and grace always comes to those who ask.

8. Show Up Consistently Love is proven in reliability. Be where you say you'll be. Do what you say you'll do. Come home when you say you will. In a world of broken promises, consistency is a radical act of love.

9. Be Quick to Forgive, Slow to Anger Forgiveness isn't feeling; it's choosing. It's deciding that your marriage is bigger than this hurt. During Lent, we remember Christ forgiving from the cross. Can we forgive from our smaller crosses?

10. Celebrate the Ordinary Create rituals that make regular days special. Coffee in bed on Saturdays. Pizza Fridays. Evening walks. These repeated rhythms become the heartbeat of your marriage—proof that everyday love is extraordinary love.

SHARING TIME (10-15 minutes)

Facilitator: Now let's take a few minutes to share as a group. Remember, sharing is voluntary, and we respect whatever level of sharing each person is comfortable with. Everything shared here stays here. *(Depending on time, choose one, two or all three questions.)*

Sharing Questions:

1. Which of the ten ways to live love in action resonates most with you right now?
2. Can you share a time when a small act of service from your spouse meant everything to you?
3. What gets in the way of putting love into action in your daily life?

DIALOGUE QUESTION (20 minutes)

Facilitator: If time permits, have couples spend 10 minutes writing the answer to the following question and 10 minutes sharing their answers privately with each other by reading each other's answer and briefly discussing. If time does not permit, provide the dialogue question for them to take home. Remind them to find 10 minutes this week to write your answer, then 10 minutes to exchange, read and discuss what you and your spouse wrote. Remember, this is just between the two of you.)

"During this Lenten season, what is one specific way I can wash your feet daily? How do I feel about making this commitment?" *Describe this feeling fully with an intensity between 1-10, a physical sensation, an image, and a shared memory, when you both felt the same way.*

CLOSING PRAYER & SCRIPTURE (4 minutes)

Leader: Let's close with words from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians (2:3-5):

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus."

Lord Jesus, You showed us that love serves, love sacrifices, love acts. During these forty days of Lent, transform our marriages into schools of love. Help us to see foot-washing moments in dish-washing, in diaper-changing, in patient listening, in gentle forgiving. Make our marriages living signs of Your love for the Church. We ask this in Your holy name. Amen.

SUGGESTED READING

- **Book:** "The Five Love Languages" by Gary Chapman (for practical application)
- **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 13 (daily meditation during Lent)

OPTIONAL OPENING/CLOSING ACTIVITY (if time permits)

"Foot Washing Affirmation" (5 minutes) Each spouse writes three specific ways their partner has "washed their feet" this past month. Exchange papers and read silently. No discussion needed—let the gratitude sink in.

Note to Presenters: Keep the tone conversational and warm. Share your own struggles and victories. Remember, you're not experts—you're fellow travelers on the journey of marriage.