REFLECTION: “Five Love Languages” (20 min): If your group is comprised of mostly married couples or couples in general, then you may want to include or make room for this reflection.

One of the ways we can nourish and cherish each other in marriage (or in any relationship for that matter) is by learning each other’s love language and speaking it regularly and often.

Learning your love language. (LG leader should assign group members to read the following description of the Love Languages)

* Each of us has an emotional “love tank” that needs to be filled. And much of what we do to each other in our relationships has a way of emptying that love tank, instead of filling it on a regular basis. Things like harsh, hurtful words, betrayal, jealousy, silent treatment, irresponsibility, tend to drain the tank.

* Our emotional love tank needs to be constantly replenished and kept full, because it is out of this love tank that we get the energy, motivation, and desire to emotionally communicate love to another. So how do we keep our love tanks full? By learning to speak the love language of another.

* One of the secrets to lasting love in any relationship is to learn to speak the love languages. There are five:

1. Words of Affirmation: words that express value toward another. These are powerful expressions of love. They include verbal compliments (not flattery), words of appreciation, words of encouragement, and kind words (this has to do with the manner in which you say things).

2. Quality Time: giving the other person your undivided attention, listening, reflecting back, and learning about the other through the conversation. It could happen when while taking a walk, while eating dinner, or driving to the movies. It’s about being together (no matter where that is) and spending that time talking and listening to each other.

3. Giving/Receiving Gifts: as a love language, this is when we give a gift as a token that we’ve been thinking of the other person. When they hold that gift in their hand, they will be thinking, “wow he or she remembered me”. And it shouldn’t matter how expensive or inexpensive the gift. Gifts do not need to be expensive...they can be made. Sometimes they are more meaningful when they are made. The important part is that the gift was given to communicate that “I was thinking about you when I took the time to buy or prepare this gift for you”.

4. Acts of Service: this is doing things you know your spouse or significant other would like you to do...with a positive attitude. This could be anything from cooking a meal, to washing the dishes, to pulling hair out of the bathtub drain, to washing the car.
The act of service is done willingly with the other in mind. If someone’s love language is acts of service, they will always tend to see words as “meaningless and empty” unless they are acted out meaningfully.

Now remember, this is different from being a “house servant” to your spouse. You can “serve” your spouse for years, but be doing it out of guilt, fear, and even manipulation (to get something in return). That’s not the spirit of this love language.

5. Physical Touch: there is overwhelming research to show that physical touch is a powerful way of communicating love and affection. Babies are living proof of that. Put any child in an environment where there is no affectionate physical contact, and you will starve the child emotionally.

For younger and older adults, and in particular for married couples, physical touch-- hugging, holding hands, kissing, sexual intercourse-- are some of the more obvious ways of communicating emotional love.

COMMENT: Out of the five love languages, each of us has a primary one. Our primary love language is the way our emotional need for love is met most effectively. It’s the way our love tank gets filled.

The easiest way to begin discovering your love language is by asking yourself, “which of these actions, when applied to me, makes me feel most loved?” Or if you’re married, “which of these love languages makes me feel secure and assured of my husband/wife’s love.

You can also tackle it from the negative side: “What does your spouse/ friend/ significant other do or say, or NOT do or say that hurts you most?” (ex: “they criticize and judge me and nag me…perhaps your love language is “Word of Affirmation”, because they are using that love language negatively and it hurts you more than it would another because that language is the primary way you get your emotional love needs met.)

* Keep in mind, that our love languages change over time. The idea is not that we’re stuck in one or two love languages over a lifetime, but that we become more proficient in all the love languages, that we learn to become multilingual when it comes to the language of love.

APPLY:
What’s your best guess as to your primary love language?
What’s your best guess as to your spouses’ (OR loved one’s) primary love language?
What one thing will you do this week to speak that love language and love them in that way? (if they are single, have them apply it to a friend or loved one, or significant other)

CLOSE IN PRAYER: