

The Divorce-Proofing America's  
Marriages Campaign presents:

## Serving Love

by Dr. Gary and Barbara Rosberg

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*Serving Love*

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## Dedication

To Linda Taylor

Thank you for using your passion and gifts

to make this workbook a reality.

Your heart for Tom, the love of your life,

is a wonderful example of what

we pray spreads across the country through the

Divorce-Proofing America's Marriages campaign.

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## A Special Note from Gary and Barb

Dear friends,

We are so glad that you have decided to spend several weeks on learning more about your spouse’s needs and how to meet them. We know that your time will reap significant benefits—not only in your own marriage but also in the people on whom your marriage has an impact: your children, your larger family, your friends, your community, and beyond. You may be surprised by that list,

but we really believe that the health of our marriages affects lots of people.

When you decided to do this workbook, you became part of a large group of couples across this nation—from Boston to Los Angeles, from Miami to Seattle—who are joining together to divorce-proof their marriages. They are taking a stand *for* healthy, growing, lifetime marriages and *against* the looming threat of divorce.

Most of you will be working through this book in the context of a small group; that's the most effective environment because you benefit from each other's perspectives, encouragement, prayer, and accountability. But even if you are going through the book on your own, we know you and your marriage will be changed.

This book is part of our larger campaign, Divorce-Proofing America's Marriages. The flagship book in that campaign, *Divorce-Proofing Your Marriage*, outlines six loves—forgiving love, serving love, persevering love, guarding love, celebrating love, and renewing love—that will strengthen your marriage and keep you from sliding toward disappointment, discord, and possibly even emotional divorce.

This workbook is a companion to our *The Five Love Needs of Men and Women* book, which addresses the serving love component. If you haven't read *Divorce-Proof Your Marriage* and worked through the companion workbook, *Discover the Love of Your Life All Over Again*, that's all right. But your group may want to do that sometime in the future. (For a list of other campaign products, see the appendix at the back of this book, or log on to our Web site at [www.divorceproof.com](http://www.divorceproof.com).)

We wish you God's richest blessings as you learn to serve your spouse by learning how to meet his or her needs.

Your friends,  
Gary and Barb Rosberg

# Introduction

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

### COURSE PURPOSE: TO LEARN TO UNDERSTAND AND MEET YOUR SPOUSE'S LOVE NEEDS.

This eight-week workbook course by Gary and Barbara Rosberg will help you serve your spouse by learning what his or her top five love needs are and by discovering how to meet those needs. When you do that, you will increase your love for each other and divorce-proof your marriage.

Each person will need his/her own copy of this workbook. Each couple will also need a copy of the book *The Five Love Needs of Men and Women* because the weekly assignments include reading chapters from the book. That book is laid out with an introductory chapter followed by ten chapters—five written by Gary as he talks to wives about their husbands' top five love needs and five written by Barb as she talks to husbands about their wives' top five love needs. As part of your assignments to read the book, both husband and wife should read the two chapters that focus on each love need from both perspectives.

This workbook is designed to equip you to

- | identify how you can meet the five love needs of your spouse;
- | discover godly attitudes of the heart necessary to meet those needs;
- | practice meeting each love need in your spouse; and
- | journal your progress on each weekly assignment.

Each week you will meet with your group for some general discussion (don't worry, no baring of your soul or pouring out your heart in front of others). The group discussion is to guide you to think about the topic. Included in the group time are opportunities for just you and your spouse to talk as well.

The heart of the study, however, comes in the homework assignments. After each group lesson you will find three sections for you to work on during the week.

**Day One** is a time of **Personal Reflection**. Here you will

- | Write down how each love need sounds, looks, and feels to you personally. You will be asked what that need looks like to you, sounds like to you, and feels like when the need is met. For your Couple Interaction time (Day Two), your spouse will be asking you to answer this specifically so he/she can discover how to meet that need in your life.
- | Determine how you can serve your spouse by meeting that love need.

**Day Two** is a time for **Couple Interaction**. Here you will

- | Take turns sharing how that particular love need being discussed sounds, looks, and feels in each other's lives.
- | Discuss with your spouse how you can meet that particular love need.

**Day Three** is called **My Assignment**, where you will

- | Complete a reading assignment of two chapters of *The Five Love Needs of Men and Women* by Gary and Barbara Rosberg.
- | Plan and practice meeting your spouse's specific love need during the week.

- 1 Journal your progress by writing down what you did to practice meeting your spouse's need and chronicle his/her response.

**Gary and Barb say:**

*You need to know your spouse's heart and needs, and then sacrificially step away from your own selfishness and learn—really learn—how to meet those needs. You must build your life on a foundation that is going to stand the test of the storms—a rock-solid foundation that will not shift under pressure. . . . Houses don't do well on sandy foundations. Neither do relationships. Marriages built on the rock of Christ Jesus not only start strong but also finish strong.*

(page 7)

## Group Session One

### What Are Your

### Love Needs?

#### Setting the Mood

1. Describe your favorite television or movie couple (from any era). What do you like about the dynamic between those two people?
- 

2. If you can, describe one of your favorite episodes or interchanges between those two people.
- 

Obviously, the couples we see on the big (or small) screen are created for an audience. They read scripts written by writers who are seeking to get you to laugh or cry. Sometimes they seem very true to life; at other times they are not. We are drawn to various characters for various reasons: the romance between Rhett and Scarlett, the intensity between Bogart and Bacall, the humor between Raymond and everybody who loves him (including his wife).

Every marriage has its own dynamic; every husband and wife team is very different because, obviously, the individuals are different. We may long for the type of household we see on the screen, but to build the strongest marriages, we need to build on strong foundations—not on fantasies, but on reality.

So, what is the reality for your marriage? Do you know what your spouse's love needs are?

Don't worry—if you don't know, you're about to find out! That's what this study is all about.

#### Discovering the Need

***Gary and Barb say:***

*Meeting your spouse's love needs is one of the most important responsibilities you have in your marriage. . . . Human nature is strange. Something in us assumes that if we treat our spouse the way we would like him or her to treat us, we are meeting our partner's needs. But when it comes to needs, the Golden Rule does not always apply. Why? Because in many cases a husband's needs are different from a wife's needs. . . . If I*

*asked you if you are meeting your spouse's love needs, you would probably answer yes. In reality, what many of us are really doing is just assuming our spouse wants what we want, and so we act on that. Often we really don't know what our spouse's needs are. And if we don't know what the needs are, we can't possibly meet them effectively.*

(pages 5, 8)

3. God created us to need relationships with others and, most important, with him. While we can easily understand that we need certain things to survive physically, what do we need to survive relationally? As a group, identify various love needs you think God created each of us with, and write them below.

- 
4. Read in Genesis 2:18-25 what God (and Adam) said about marriage. What physical and relational needs are to be met in the marriage relationship?

---

When we wrote our book *The Five Love Needs of Men and Women*, we surveyed more than 700 couples. We gave them a list of twenty needs and asked each spouse to individually rank, in order of importance, what he or she needed from the spouse and what the spouse needed from them. You can look at the list in appendix B.

As you can see from that list, we expect a lot from each other, don't we? You surely have had a need for everything on that list at one time or another. Obviously, it is not realistic to expect your spouse to be able to meet all of those needs for you at all times.

5. Ultimately, to whom should we look for fulfillment of all our needs? (Read Philippians 4:19.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. At the same time, however, God gave us marriage. To make it the best it can be, we need to be doing our best to meet our spouse's love needs. In what ways do you think that understanding each other's top five love needs could help improve people's marriages?

---

For the purposes of this book, we will be focusing on the top five love needs that we discovered in our survey. As different as we know men and women are, we found it interesting that the top five love needs for both husbands and wives are almost identical, although men and women ranked them in a slightly different order. In the following chart, number 1 indicates the most important love need.

***Husbands' Top Five Love Needs***

- 1. Unconditional Love and Acceptance
- 2. Sexual Intimacy
- 3. Companionship
- 4. Encouragement and Affirmation
- 5. Spiritual Intimacy

7. On the lines below, write

- (a) your definition of each love need,
- (b) how it might show itself in a marriage, and
- (c) why it is important in a marriage.

Share your comments as a group.

*Unconditional love and acceptance*

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_

*Intimacy (Sexual [men] / Emotional [women])—(men answer for men; women answer for women)*

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_

*Spiritual Intimacy*

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_

*Encouragement / Affirmation*

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_

*Companionship*

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_

8. What are some possible results that could occur if couples never meet each other's love needs?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Sharing as a Couple**

For this section, you and your spouse need to work together to answer the questions listed below.

We realize that you and your spouse may not fall in the same pattern as the majority of our survey. So now it's your turn. Rate these love needs from 1 to 5 for you, and then rate according to how you think your spouse will rate them.

***My Top Five Love Needs***

- \_\_\_ Companionship
- \_\_\_ Encouragement/Affirmation
- \_\_\_ Intimacy (sexual/emotional)
- \_\_\_ Spiritual intimacy
- \_\_\_ Unconditional love/acceptance

Turn to your spouse, and share with each other how you rated both lists of love needs. For now, just share the numbers you each placed beside each need—save the details for later discussion.

Is this how you thought your spouse would prioritize these needs? \_\_\_\_\_

If you weren't exactly right, don't panic. Most people aren't completely accurate in how they rate their spouses. After all, that's why you're here! Put the corrected list below. Then memorize it. You'll need it in the weeks to come (for that matter, you'll need it forever!).

***My Spouse's Top Five Love Needs Are:***

---

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---

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Ask your spouse about a time when you met one of the above needs. Have him/her describe how it made him/her feel. Write that description below:

---

## Preparing for the Week

As a group, study the following ground rules.

### 1. Concentrate on Your Spouse's Needs

Take the responsibility to "give" to your spouse, and trust that God will meet your own needs however he chooses. By being "other focused" and concerned about meeting your spouse's needs first, you may be surprised how God will bless you by involving your husband or wife in meeting each of your own needs.

### 2. Avoid Criticism

When it comes time for your spouse to focus on your needs, be careful not to be critical of

how he or she hasn't met your past needs. Never criticize your spouse to the group.

### **3. Keep Your Group Sharing Time Safe**

Some, if not all, in your group will want to share the progress that each is making from week to week. Keep your sharing time confidential within your group, and avoid comparing each other's marriage relationships. Make your group a safe place to share your strengths and struggles.

### **4. Focus on "Being" as Well as "Doing"**

Meeting our spouse's needs involves "doing" something. But our "doing" is empowered by our "being" something. As our attitudes are transformed, our behavior changes. So throughout this course you will be asked to focus on certain Christ-like attitudes that will direct your actions.

### **5. Complete Your Weekly Exercises and Assignments**

Each week you will be asked to spend a couple of hours between these group sessions in discovering how to better meet your spouse's needs. This includes personal reflection time, couple interaction time, journaling time, plus time to read the assigned chapters.

*During this week, you will study the love need of unconditional love, rated number 1 by both husbands and wives. Remember to do the three days of homework immediately following this lesson. This will include reading chapters 1 and 2 of The Five Love Needs of Men and Women.*

*End the meeting in prayer.*

# Week One—Day One

## My Personal Reflection: Understanding Unconditional Love

During the week, read chapters 1 and 2 in *The Five Love Needs of Men and Women*. In chapter 1, Gary talks to wives about how their husbands feel the need for unconditional love; in chapter 2, Barb talks to husbands about how their wives feel the need for unconditional love. It will be useful for both of you to read both chapters.

To help your spouse understand what unconditional love means to you and when you need it most, answer the three questions listed below. Your spouse will be answering these same three questions from his or her perspective, and you will be sharing your answers with each other later this week.

1. What does unconditional love **sound** like to you? Check (✓) any phrase that applies, and then write out your own answer below in detail.

- “You did what!?”
- “You don’t need to apologize, I really understand.”
- “I don’t even want to hear your excuses.”
- “That’s okay, honey.”
- “I have no idea of what you were thinking.”
- “It doesn’t matter sweetheart, I love you.”

Complete the following:

I need my spouse’s unconditional love when I

---

Words that will express unconditional love to me are

---

2. What does unconditional love **look** like to you? Check (✓) any phrase that applies, and then write out your own answer below in detail.

- A warm embrace
- Deafening silence
- A blank look
- A cold shoulder
- A reassuring smile

q A gentle kiss

Actions that show that unconditional love to me are

---

3. When your spouse shows you a love without condition, it makes you **feel** a certain way. Describe those feelings.
- 

### Learning to Serve through Unconditional Love

Because we are human, we can never love unconditionally in the absolute and perfect sense in which God loves us. But he is the love model we strive to replicate in our marriages. Contemplate the depth of God's love and breadth of his grace for you by completing these sentences.

4. God, I believe you would love me even if I
- 

5. Sometimes, dear God, I don't feel I deserve your love because
- 

Would you be willing to share the above completed sentences with your spouse and explain how much it would mean to you if he or she could love you that way?

Yes  No  Maybe  I'm afraid how my spouse might answer

End this time of reflection by making the following prayer your own.

Dear Father God, thank you for loving me without condition. It is by your grace that you have forgiven me. You humbled yourself by giving your Son as a sacrifice for me when I was a sinner. I fail, and you still keep on loving me. I sin, and you offer me continual forgiveness. May the grace you show me be the grace I extend to my spouse. Let your forgiveness be my forgiveness. Let your patience be my patience. Let your unselfish giving be my unselfish giving. Let your unselfish service be mirrored in me. And let your unfailing, unconditional love be shown through me. Amen.

# Week One—Day Two

## Couple Interaction:

### Serving My Spouse with Unconditional Love

You will need to set aside about thirty minutes to complete this exercise with your spouse. Be sure you have selected a place where you will not be interrupted (turn off the phones and pagers, and find a location that will allow you to comfortably share with each other).

This time is intended to help you

- | understand how you can be part of God’s plan of meeting your spouse’s need for unconditional love;
- | discover a way to practice meeting this need for your spouse;
- | plan a time later this week to focus on meeting this need for your spouse.

#### How Does My Spouse Experience Unconditional Love?

Take turns sharing with each other how you completed your Personal Reflection questions. Say: “I truly want to know what unconditional love sounds, looks, and feels like to you in various situations.” In the space provided below, take notes as you listen to what your spouse says:

To my spouse, unconditional love **sounds** like:

---

To my spouse, unconditional love **looks** like:

---

To my spouse, unconditional love **feels** like:

---

What fresh insight did you gain about meeting your spouse’s need for a love without condition? Share that insight with your spouse, and express that you want your love saturated with grace so you can consistently love him or her no matter what.

---

## Talking It Over

Loving without condition is accepting your spouse for who he or she is, no matter what. Confessing to each other that you need the other's loving grace is a vital step in meeting each other's need for unconditional love.

Go back to the exercise "Learning to Serve through Unconditional Love" in the previous day's lesson and share how you completed questions 4 and 5. Now fill in your personal answers to the following questions, and then share them with your spouse.

\_\_\_\_\_ (your spouse's name) I need to know you really love and accept me especially when I

---

Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ (your spouse's name), I don't feel I deserve your love because

---

Pray this prayer together:

Dear loving Father, as a couple we want to meet each other's need for unconditional love, but we need your help. You alone are the ultimate supplier of unconditional love. Let us sense your love for us right now so we can better love each other. Grant our love relationship your spirit of grace so we can meet each other's need for unconditional love. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Week One—Day Three

## My Assignment: Practicing Unconditional Love

You have two assignments this week:

1. Read chapters 1 and 2 of *The Five Love Needs of Men and Women*.

Have you completed that assignment yet?

Yes    No    I've started, but I have more to read.

2. Practice meeting your spouse's need for unconditional love.

Your assignment (should you choose to accept it) is to understand how your spouse needs to experience your unconditional love and to practice doing that with patient, forgiving, unselfish love and sacrificial service. Record what you did or said and how your spouse responded.

Be creative and pro-active. You might want to surprise your mate with a date night. (If you need ideas, check out our book *40 Unforgettable Dates with Your Mate*, which is stocked with ideas for dates that will help you meet your spouse's love needs.) Or you may want to write a thoughtful poem or letter. Fulfilling this assignment needs to be something that expresses to your spouse that you love him/her without any strings attached. Journal below how it went and if you're comfortable, be prepared to report what happened to your small group later this week.

## My Journal

Here is what I did and how it went when I practiced loving my spouse without condition this week.

Here is what I have learned about how I need to meet my spouse's need for unconditional love.

