Love is patient.

Love is kind.

Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.

Love does not insist on its own way.

Love is not irritable or resentful.

Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth.

Love binds everything together in perfect harmony.
Clothe yourself with compassion and kindness.

Clothe yourself with humility and meekness.

Be patient.

Bear with one another.

Forgive each other.

Be thankful.
Interacting with God’s Story and Vision

A. Courtship then and now

From arranged marriages in biblical times to common-law marriages to prenuptial contracts in modern times, we see examples of commitment. Read and discuss Darling’s reference to courtship as a difficult activity (ABS, p. 71). Share your thoughts and stories about courtship: what it was like for you, what conventions you followed, what you would do differently now.

Discuss the role of the church in marriage preparation and teaching about commitment.

» Does the church expect different premarital behavior from its members than what happens in society?
» What suggestions can you give to help couples develop a strong, loving relationship before they marry?

B. Create a modern-day retelling of the story

Use your imagination for a storyline that maintains the basic plot but updates the characters, dialogue, and setting. For example, how might Ruth attract Boaz’s attention using social media? What role would an older woman play in matchmaking? What concerns would Boaz have before agreeing to date Ruth? Have fun with it. Option: Act out your story using the props used in presenting the Scripture.

C. Security, risk-taking, and vulnerability

This reflective activity can be done individually or in a small, safe group. These themes have to do with life experiences in general. Both Ruth and Naomi wanted security, which in those days meant finding a man to look after them.

» Where do people seek and find security when they don’t have a partner?

Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz took risks and made themselves vulnerable as they navigated this courtship.

» What risks do we face when we choose to get close to someone?
» Are we willing to be vulnerable (risking love with our whole hearts, being grateful for what we have, and feeling worthy of love and acceptance)?

Share your thoughts with another person or two (allow yourself to be vulnerable) or journal about how you respond to these themes.

D. Symbols of covenant

Choose from art and craft supplies to create a symbol of what covenant means to you. Think of the biblical stories of friendship and close relationships between individuals. Reflect on your relationship with God. What image or picture will serve as a reminder of the heartfelt covenant you have with another and/or with God? As you create your symbol, express a prayer of gratitude for the love you experience.

E. Loving biblically

Couples choose each other to live in a deeper, committed relationship. Such is the relationship God desires for us. Read Colossians 3:12-15. While the writer is addressing the Christian community, these verses are appropriate for Christian couples. Consider the behaviors exemplified by God’s chosen ones. For each behavior or character trait, offer a practical, concrete way that this is lived out in a marriage relationship. For example, “By clothing myself with patience, I will not become frustrated when my spouse is late (again).”

Invite couples to share stories from their marriage that illustrate these phrases.

» Which traits are easy to apply?
» Which ones are not so easy?

Offer a prayer of thanks for the gracious love of God and for the special people in your lives.

For groups with no married couples, read the text as a directive for close friends or the church community.

» How are these characteristics played out in your congregation?
» Which ones are practiced well? Which ones still need work?
» How did Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi live out these values?