

TITLE: "What Love Language Do You Speak?"

TEXT: I Corinthians 13:4-8a (NT p. 175):

"⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.⁸Love never ends."

Introduction – Our emotional gas tank

This was sent into *Reader's Digest* by Donna Martin:

Curious when I found two black and white negatives in a drawer, I had them made into prints. I was pleasantly surprised to see they were of a younger, slimmer me taken on one of my first dates with my husband. When I showed him the photographs, his face lit up. "Wow!" he said, "It's my old Plymouth."

There are differences, some very obvious, between ourselves and those we love.

In his book *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman says that "...people speak different love languages" and that we must learn the love language of the one we love to effectively communicate love. Chapman lists the five primary love languages as: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service and physical touch. The book is mostly about spouses, but these can be applied to any loving relationship.

Love is like a car's gas tank. If the tank has gas, and everything else is functioning properly, the car will run smoothly. But if the tank is allowed to go dry, the car will not move. Chapman says that within each of us there is an invisible "emotional love tank." If we do not receive love in our own love language, we are deprived of the love that each of us needs to lead a happy and fulfilled life.

The trouble is that each of us tends to give to those we love the same love language that we want to receive. If the person has the same love language as ours, that works out fine. But if the person we love has a different love language, then she or he will not FEEL the love we are trying to convey.

Words of Affirmation

The first love language is: “Words of affirmation. ...Mark Twain once said, “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” If someone you love has a primary love language of affirmation, you will need to give words of affirmation more regularly than that.

There are many ways to do so. Chapman writes that “Verbal compliments, or words of APPRECIATION, are powerful statements of affirmation. “You look sharp in that suit.” ...“Do you ever look nice in that dress! Wow!” ...“You must be the greatest potato cook in the world. I love these potatoes.” ...“I really appreciate your washing the dishes.”

Another way to affirm someone we love is by words of ENCOURAGEMENT. We all live with a certain amount of self doubt and so we lack the courage to be all we can possibly be. Words of encouragement can inspire one we love to do something that he or she is capable of doing but lacks the confidence and motivation to attempt.

If you do not need words of affirmation yourself, it may be difficult for you to give them. However, words of affirmation can have the beneficial side effect of motivating the person to RECIPROCATE.

Chapman tells of a woman who came to him because, after nine months of nagging, her husband still had not painted their bedroom. Chapman advised her never to mention painting the bedroom again. Instead, every time he did something good, Chapman told her to give him a verbal compliment. By this, he did not mean resorting to flattery. The guy DID do a lot around the house, like taking care of the cars, paying the bills and cleaning up. So, she started thanking him for each of these things.

This changed BOTH of their attitudes. She became less shrewish and more appreciative and he felt more appreciated and less harassed. AND, he finally painted the bedroom.

ARE WORDS OF AFFIRMATION YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE? ARE THEY THE LOVE LANGUAGE OF ONE YOU LOVE?

Quality Time

Quality time means giving someone your UNDIVIDED attention. Quality time is not watching TV together. When you watch TV, the program has your attention. Quality time is sitting together, looking at each other and talking. Quality time is taking a walk together and talking about what you see along the way. Quality time is talking about things that are important to each of you when you go out to eat.

Quality time means listening to our loved one with your heart as well as our head. Dr. Chapman relates a counseling session with Patrick whose wife has left him. He said:

“My wife would come home from work and tell me about the problems in her office. I would listen to her and then tell her what I thought she should do. I always gave her advice.The next day she would come home from work and tell me about the same problems. I would ask her if she did what I suggested the day before. She would shake her head and say no. So, I’d repeat my advice.”

What she wanted was concern, understanding and sympathy, NOT an intellectual analysis of her problems. Something like, “Of COURSE you are angry and resentful, you SHOULD be under those circumstances. I’m sorry you have to put up with all that stuff and I really appreciate what you go through each day to help support our family.” THAT is listening with his HEART as well as his head.

IS QUALITY TIME YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE? IS IT THE LOVE LANGUAGE OF ONE YOU LOVE?

Receiving Gifts

This may sound rather mercenary, but it isn’t. Here’s how Gary Chapman defines a gift:

A gift is something you can hold in your hand and say, “Look, he was thinking of me,” or “She remembered me.” You must be THINKING of someone to give him a gift. The gift itself is the symbol of that thought. It doesn’t matter if it costs money. What is important is that you thought of her. And it is not the thought implanted only in the MIND that counts, but the thought expressed in actually securing the gift and giving it as the expression of love.

Chapman tells of a couple who was married for fifteen years and had three children. She was at the point of leaving him. He simply couldn't understand it. He said he worked hard so that she didn't have to work if she did not want to. He paid the bills, took care of the cars and yard, did dishes and spent time with the kids. In spite of it all, she felt the marriage had been dead for the past three years.

They attended a marriage seminar by Gary Chapman. On the way home, he bought her a rose from a street vender. She was touched. Later that week, he called her from work and said that he would bring home pizza so she didn't have to cook that night. She really appreciated it. Later, he brought each child a box of Cracker Jacks and her a potted plant, saying, "I knew the rose would die and I wanted something that kept showing I love you." She cried.

He had been giving her acts of service, which was HIS love language, but he finally realized that HER love language was receiving gifts. We need to learn to express love by using the love language of the one we love rather than our own love language.

IS RECEIVING GIFTS YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE? IS IT THE LOVE LANGUAGE OF ONE YOU LOVE?

Acts of Service

What ARE acts of service? Chapman says they are "things you know your spouse would like you to do," such as: making meals, doing dishes, washing the car, mowing the lawn, dusting the house, watching the kids, clipping the shrubs, raking leaves, cleaning the bathroom, shopping for groceries, fixing the leaky drain, shoveling snow, cleaning the cat box, walking the dog, fixing the car, taking out trash, etc, etc.

Gary Chapman writes about a young couple, Mark and Mary, who disagreed about everything after they got married. When asked for examples, the wife, Mary, said, "He wants me to stay home all day and work in the house. He gets mad if I go see my mother or go shopping or something."

He said, "I don't mind her going to see her mother, but when I come home, I like to see the house cleaned up. Some weeks she doesn't make the bed up for three or four days, and half the time, she hasn't started supper. I work hard, and I like to eat when I get home. Besides that, the house is a wreck. The baby's things are all over the floor and the baby is dirty...."

She said, “What’s wrong with him helping around the house? He acts like a husband shouldn’t do anything around the house. All he wants to do is work and hunt. He expects me to do everything. He even expects me to wash the car.”

If you listen, you will understand that both had a love language of acts of service. They each had a different list of services they wanted from the other, and they each felt that because they were not receiving those acts of service, that the other didn’t really CARE. Chapman asked them to list 4 things that would help the other to show their love. Each one did and they agreed to do each of those four things as often as possible.

Mark and Mary had been criticizing each other and getting nowhere. Once they REQUESTED the things on their lists, the other started doing them willingly and their marriage started to turn around. Love is a CHOICE that cannot be coerced. Acts of service have to be done willingly. Demanding that things have to be done “or else” may get the jobs done, but they will not be done out of love.

ARE ACTS OF SERVICE YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE? ARE THEY THE LOVE LANGUAGE OF ONE YOU LOVE?

Physical Touch

Pete and Patsy were two people mentioned in the book. When they were first married, their relationship was great. Then Pete’s job became more demanding, so he had to spend longer hours at work. Pete and Patsy gradually drifted apart emotionally. She complained that he was always busy, always thinking about work. He simply became more distant, spending much of his time at home on his computer.

Then they went for counseling. Pete said:

“I was so insecure in my own sense of self-worth that it took forever for me to be willing to identify and acknowledge that her lack of touch had caused me to withdraw. I never told her that I wanted to be touched, although I was crying inside for her to reach out and touch me. In our dating relationship, I had always taken the initiative in hugging, kissing and holding hands, but she had always been responsive. I felt that she loved me, but after we got married, there were times when I reached out to her physically and she was not responsive. Maybe with her new job responsibilities she was too tired. I don’t know, but I took it personally. I felt that she didn’t find me attractive. Then I decided I would not take the initiative because I didn’t want to be rejected. ...My withdrawal was to stay away from the pain I felt when I was with her. I felt rejected, unwanted, and unloved.”

Patsy said:

“He’s right. I would go weeks without touching him. It didn’t cross my mind. I was preparing meals, keeping the house clean, doing his laundry, and trying to stay out of his way. I honestly did not know what else I could be doing. I could not understand his withdrawal or his lack of attention to me. It’s not that I dislike touching; it’s just that it was never that important to me. Spending time with me is what made me feel loved and appreciated, giving me attention. It really didn’t matter whether we hugged or kissed. As long as he gave me attention, I felt loved.”

His love language? PHYSICAL TOUCH. ...Her love language? Spending QUALITY TIME together. Once they realized this, she started to reach out and touch him and he began to feel loved. He also began to spend quality time with her and she started to feel loved. After that, their relationship began to improve dramatically.

IS PHYSICAL TOUCH YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE? IS IT THE LOVE LANGUAGE OF ONE YOU LOVE?

Conclusion – Love never ends

When you are not receiving love in your love language, you need to TELL him, or her, in no uncertain terms. Use “I” statements. “When you watch sports all Sunday afternoon and evening, I feel left out and lonely.”

“Well then, sit down and watch with me and have a beer,” is not a helpful answer. A cry for help in a relationship deserves to be heard and discussed. Turn off the TV and try to work out a compromise that will be conducive to you both.

Jesus says that the MOST important thing in life is to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. You have no nearer or dearer neighbors than your wife, children, family and friends. No one who is dying ever says, “I should have spent more time watching TV.” I spend a lot of time with people who are dying and this is so true. Any investment you make in love will pay dividends for as long as you live.

As a matter of fact, love even continues to pay dividends AFTER we die. You’ve heard the saying, “You can’t take anything with you?” It’s not true. God says “Love never ends.” Love NEVER ends. When it’s time for you to go, be sure you have a lot of love to take with you because you won’t have anything else.

Amen.