

Title: "Love Believes All Things"

I Corinthians 13 (NT p. 175)

Introduction - Scariest day of the year

What is the scariest day of the year?..... If you are a guy, and especially if you are dating or newly married, the scariest day is VALENTINE'S DAY.

Why is it scary?

The thought of buying a gift that reflects your love is a daunting task; at least it is for many guys. So, what do you do?

If you listen to the ads from jewelry stores, you should buy something so expensive that it takes till the next Valentine's Day to pay it off. Then it's time to buy another expensive piece of jewelry, on and on, until you are in hock for the rest of your life.

On the other hand, if Valentine's Day ISN'T scary, maybe it SHOULD be.A guy I used to work with, who had been married over 20 years, said, "I just got the wife a box of chocolates like I do every year."

I said, "Dan, I thought you told me that she was diagnosed with diabetes last year."

He said, "Yeah, so?"

These are two extremes: giving a gift that costs way too much or giving a gift without any thought about the person to whom it is given. So, what ARE we to give on Valentine's Day, Christmas, a birthday or whenever else we want to give a gift to a person we love? I'll answer that in a minute, but first I want to talk about love languages.

1. Finding the other's love language

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 ones we love to effectively communicate love. The five love languages are: words of affirmation, quality time, RECEIVING GIFTS, acts of service and physical touch.

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.

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.

Fortunately 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.

2. What IS a gift?

Now getting back to the question of gifts. Here is 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.

No matter what the jewelers advertise around Valentine's Day, you don't have to go into debt to buy an expensive gift. And, if the guy I worked with had bought his diabetic wife a box of sugarless chocolates, it would have shown that he was thinking of her specially and not just continuing in a meaningless rut. Sometimes a gift does cost money, but for a person whose love language is receiving gifts, it is the thoughtfulness that counts.

3. Giving ourselves

The greatest gift we can give, is the gift of ourselves. And the greatest gift we can receive is the gift of one we love.

I knew a woman who loved horses since she was a child. She married and had a daughter and she bought her a horse as soon as she was old enough to ride. The girl had riding lessons and her mother helped her with her riding at home. They went to horse show after show after horse show.

The husband went to many of the shows to watch his daughter, but was not really into horses. Even the daughter was not as interested as her Mom. One day the husband said, casually, "I think my wife loves horse shows more than me." Later I mentioned that her husband did not seem to share her passion for horses and she said, "Nonsense. He's very proud of the prizes our daughter has won."

.....I had a friend who was married with a son. He and his wife each worked hard during the week. Just about every weekend, he hunted and fished, while she stayed home and cared for their child. One evening, while he and I were getting ready to go fishing early the next morning, she said, "Well, you know him, he loves fishing and hunting better than anything."

Many of us have a grand passion in life. It can be horses, dogs, hunting, fishing, golf, softball, watching a sports team, quilting, cars, boats, motorcycles, jet skis, snow mobiles, hiking, rock climbing or a combination of these. These activities are MORE than just hobbies. They help to define who we are. Don't think that I am condemning them out of hand. Many marriages can thrive with these in the mix.

HOWEVER, when you come to a fork in the road, and one road leads you closer to a person you love and the other farther away from a person you love, you HAVE to chose your loved one. Why? Because LOVE is more important than anything.

You've heard the saying, "You can't take anything with you." 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.

There is also a flip side to this. When a loved one has come to that fork in the road, and one road is leading her or him away from you, 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. I need you to spend more time with me."

"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 plan, a compromise, that will be conducive to you both.

4. God's love language

One of God's love languages is receiving gifts. It's hard enough to buy a gift for the woman or man who has everything. What do we give God who really DOES have everything? ...Listen to what Jesus says (Matthew 25):

³¹ 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to ME."

This morning we are beginning our annual One Great Hour of Sharing campaign to help poor people around the world. Our gifts feed, house and clothe those affected by natural disasters; provide shelter for refugees fleeing from war, help poor people start new lives and build safe communities. If you want to give God a gift, help those in need.

If you don't have much right now, don't give much. Remember that Jesus praised the widow who gave a couple pennies. True gifts to God, like true gifts to those people we love, don't have to break our bank; they just need to show that you are thinking of them and care enough to give.

Conclusion – The easiest thing to do

Let me conclude by saying that one of the EASIEST things to do in life is also one of the most disastrous. What is it?Taking love for granted. Whether you realize it or not, whether you know it or not, whether you BELIEVE it or not, THE most important thing in the world, is your love of God and your love of others.

Take the TIME, and make the effort, to SHOW the people who love you, and the Lord who loves you, that YOU love them.

Amen.

NOT USED

Let just give a word of caution here. If your language is receiving gifts, you need to be careful. ...Let me tell you about "Susan" who worked in an office with me. Susan was beautiful and had several boyfriends. One of her boyfriends sent her roses at work...several times.

Let me say that I was the only guy in an office with five middle-aged women and the young gorgeous Susan. When those roses arrived at the office, I was not prepared for the reaction. The women were enraptured. "Sending ROSES to you at WORK!" they crooned. One of the ladies, with tears in her eyes, said, "I don't care WHAT he looks like, or even if he has a JOB; MARRY THAT MAN!!!"

Well, she did. A month later they were divorced. He used to lock her in the house when he went out for the evening. Then he did not even want her to go off to work. The signs of unhealthy obsession were there when they were dating, but she missed them. ...All I am trying to say is that speaking your love language is important, but the character of the person must also be considered.