

Title: "Love Hopes All Things"

I Corinthians 13 (NT p. 175)

Introduction – Romantic obsession

I had a friend in college named Dick. He grew up on a farm in New Jersey. Dick could lift the rear end of a Volkswagen Bug like it was box of confetti. Dick was always in a good mood, always ready to go someplace, help someone or work on a project for the yearbook with me.

One morning I found Dick in the men's dorm lounge sitting on a couch with a dazed expression on his face. I said, "Dick, you look like a cow dying in a hailstorm; what's the matter?"

He said, "Maureen." For the next 20 minutes I heard what a wonderful, beautiful, perfect person Maureen was.

Now Maureen's parents were wealthy plantation owners in Costa Rica. I liked Maureen, and Dick was my friend, but you could not EVER find two people more dissimilar. I knew from past experience that people in love are pretty much blind, deaf and dumb. By "dumb" I mean you can't tell them anything about their beloved. So I just said, "I'm glad for you, Dick," and beat a hasty retreat.

For the rest of the school year, you never saw one without the other. Dick stopped going out with the guys. Dick quit the yearbook staff. Dick's marks fell. Dick started doing things he had never done before in his life. He took Maureen out to eat, went to parties and even—and this made ALL the guys shudder—took her clothes shopping.

People in love think that the euphoria will last forever. However, Psychologists say that romantic obsession lasts from nine months to two years. What happens after that? Well, the old pursuits that were unconsciously sacrificed early on begin to become interesting once again. Some relationships never make that transition. Dick's and Maureen's did not and eventually we got our friend back....

In his book *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman says that this transition from romantic love to a more mature love must involve discovering your partner's love language. He says that each person speaks a different love language 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.

This morning I will be preaching on acts of service

1. 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.

Mark wrote:

- Make up the beds every day.
- Have the baby’s face washed when I get home.
- Put the baby things in the closet before I get home.
- Try to have supper at least started when I get home so we can eat 30-45 minutes after I get home.

Mary wrote:

- I wish he would wash the car every week instead of expecting me to do it.
- I wish he would change the baby’s diaper after he gets home in the afternoon, especially if I am working on supper.
- I wish he would vacuum the house for me once a week.
- I wish he would mow the grass every week in the summer and not let it get so tall that I am ashamed of our yard.

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 the motivation will be to avoid consequences rather than acting out of love.

2. Chapman goes makes some other observations about marriage.

a. What a person does before marriage is no indication of what he or she will do AFTER marriage. I knew an extroverted woman who met an introverted man. When they fell in love, a strange thing happened to the man. ...He started to talk. His mother was amazed, his friends were stunned, his girl friend was happy to see the wonderful change she had inspired. A month after the wedding, she said to me, “I can’t understand it; he never TALKS!” Sooner or later, people revert to being the person they were before they “fell in love.”

b. If you want to learn your spouse’s love language, listen to his or her CRITICISM. When someone you love criticizes you, he or she is trying to convey a deep inner need for love that they desperately. Try not to react emotionally, which isn’t easy if you are being criticized. Instead, try to probe a little. Chapman says, “A wife may say to her husband after he gives her a criticism, ‘It sounds like that is extremely important to you. Could you explain why it is so crucial?’ Criticism often needs clarification. Initiating such a conversation may eventually turn the criticism into a request rather than a demand.”

c. Be willing to give up assumed ROLES

Don’t assume your partner will fill the same rolls your parents did. There was couple. He was an only child. His mother had not worked outside the home and carefully prepared a meal every evening. She came from a single parent home with several siblings. Her mother brought home fast food for dinner and other meals were often heated up in the microwave. They rarely ate at the same time.

She assumed he would be OK with her parent’s eating style and he assumed she would learn how to cook like his Mom. After a pretty rock start, he wound up doing most of the cooking and she was willing to clean up after the meals that he prepared. At last observation, he had also started to like some fast food. Be willing to sacrifice assumed roles for the sake of a relationship.

3. Acts of service for God

One of God's love languages is also acts of service. There ARE things the Lord would like us to choose to do. And since the Bible says that the church is "the bride of Christ," there are acts of service God wants each of us to do for our "Husband," the Lord.

There are a couple things that still need to be done for the Women's Retreat on April 4th, which is less than 2 weeks away. There is a list of groceries on the lectern in the fellowship hall that are needed by April 3rd. Also, if you haven't given your RSVP yet, please sign up on the clip board that is going around.

Now I want to thank each person who willingly does acts of service for the Lord in our church.

Thank you to all those working to prepare for the Women's retreat.

Thank you to those serving as ushers and greeters.

Thank you to those serving dinners and coffees.

Thank you to those serving as Deacons.

Thank you to those singing in the choir.

Thank you to those serving on Session.

God does not demand that we do acts of service in the church. God ASKS us to CHOOSE to do them to show that we love God. Thank you for showing your love to God in SO many ways!

Conclusion – What does love mean?

When I was going through the process of ordination, one of the pastors who oversaw the process was married. Every time he told his wife, "I love you," she would ask, "What does that mean?" ...He said, "At first it REALLY bothered me. I assumed she KNEW what it meant. But gradually it made me analyze what it DID mean. Sometimes it meant, 'I am insecure and need your assurance.' Sometimes it meant, 'I feel affectionate.' Sometimes it meant doing the dishes before I went off to a meeting."

What does love mean to YOU?

What does love mean to those who LOVE you?

What does love mean to GOD?

This week, think about these things and SHOW those you love that you love them.

Amen.