

Five Love Languages (Gary Chapman) — Words of Affirmation, Gift Giving, Quality Time, Physical Touch, Acts of Service

1 Corinthians 8:1b (NIV)

“Knowledge puffs up, while love builds up.”

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NASB)

If I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. ⁵ It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own benefit; it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered, ⁶ it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ it keeps every confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away with; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away with. ⁹ For we know in part and prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with. ¹¹ When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known. ¹³ But now faith, hope, and love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Introduction

Since we celebrate Valentine’s Day this week, I decided to talk about ‘love’ this morning.

Everyone lives on love: We need love. Everyone desires to be loved. Everyone, in fact, needs to be loved. We are the creatures of love. We live on love; when we are loved, we thrive. When we are not loved, we wither. We give one another love and we receive love back from each other.

How are we doing in this business of loving one another? Why do we see so many people today clamoring for love? Why are there so many people, children and adults alike, deprived of love? Because they don’t receive love; therefore, they have nothing to give back to others. It works the other way around, too. That is, if you don’t give love to others, you receive not their love back.

How do you let people know you love them? How do you communicate your love message to the recipient? Just say it, “I love you,” you may think. But sometimes whatever ways you expressed your love don’t always register in the person’s heart in the way that you meant. In other words, we need to say the love message in the ways that the other person would surely understand and appreciate it. We need to communicate in the same ‘language’ between us and the recipients.

E.g., If I say to you “I love you,” in Korean, even though I say 100 times until my face is blue, you still won’t be able to understand what I said, because the Korean language is not your language of communication. However, if I say, “I love you,” in English, everyone here would get it right away, simply because it is the language we use in America. It registers immediately in your heart. The key in loving business is the means of communication. The means to convey our love to each other. Of course, there’s more than one language of love, so I would call them love languages. That’s the topic for today: the love languages we use daily.

Credit to Gary Chapman: Before I go on, I must give a proper credit to the person who coined this terminology: *love languages*. His name is Gary Chapman. He came up with his theory that there are five different love languages people use daily.

One time, my wife and I listened to an old cassette sermon tape (over 20 years old!) by him. The sermon was very entertaining and informational that I took notes of the sermon. I also put what I learned that day into practice in my marriage relationship and it helped me a lot.

So, my message this morning is heavily based on his message. I pray that my sermon would help every one of us to strengthen our relationships with our spouses, children, and siblings. When these love languages are practiced well daily, it will improve our relationships with our family, friends, neighbors, and even coworkers.

Content

Definition of Love Languages: Let me repeat what I mean by love languages: Love languages are the means of communication to say “I love you” to each other. They are the languages that the recipient would understand in the ways that they are loved. They are languages that would instantly register our love messages in the hearts of the recipients.

Please note here that Mr. Chapman mostly focuses on the ‘emotional aspect of love’ and ‘how-to’ practice thereof. In other words, the more important spiritual side such as ‘God’s love poured out into our hearts’ (Romans 5:5), ‘love does no wrong to a neighbor’ (Romans 13:10), or ‘love your enemies’ (Matthew 5:44) are not covered in his message. Neither will I cover that this morning.

Emotional Tank: let me talk about the emotional aspect of love: Everyone has their emotional tank that is filled up with love. For instance, if someone loves you by saying, “You are wonderful,” then the level of love in your tank increases. If someone spends a quality time with you, you feel loved and the level of love in your tank goes up as well. Out of that reservoir, you can give back your love to someone else in your life. See the pattern here: in their love languages, people give and take ‘love’ with each other, build up each other in love, and help each other feel loved. When these languages are practiced faithfully by couples in marriage, for instance, especially in a troubled marriage, their marriages can be healed and even thrive. Now, let’s go back to

Five Love Languages: Chapman identifies five languages. I encourage you to follow along my sermon points printed on your bulletin. The first language of love is “Words of Affirmation.”

Words of Affirmation: Here are some examples of words of affirmation: “I Love You.” “You look great today!” “You did a fantastic job!” “You’re the best!” “You are beautiful!” “You’re awesome!” The list goes on. Many of us are fluent in this love language. However, some of us are not so good at this, so we often say nothing to our loved ones. Others are so poor on this language that they end up saying the opposite, hurting their children and spouses. E.g., One father would say to his son, “You, no good bum!” This became a permanent scar in the son’s emotions for the rest of his life.

E.g.2., In the book “the Lord of the Rings,” Faramir, the younger son of the steward of Gondor, yearned for his father’s affirmation, yet his father never gave one to him. E.g. 3., One night, after the political rally on their campaign trail, George W. Bush drove home late with his wife Laura sitting next to him. Still his truck running in front of his garage, he asked Laura, “What do you think of my speech tonight?” Laura obviously didn’t give him the highest mark, and he was so upset that he drove his truck into the garage wall. True story, folks. The next one is...

Gifts Giving: Clearly this is the language some people are very familiar with. They are the masters of remembering special days and events in your life. They would never fail to give you flowers/cards/presents or even cook your favorite food. E.g., I know one husband who would save up money for five years to buy one diamond ring for his wife on their every fifth anniversary. Even though the husband went to the Lord, the wife so appreciated that she still talks about it years later. For someone who uses this language, if you don’t give gifts to her/him, s/he would not feel loved. Love deprived. Love missing. Unloved. The next one is...

Quality Time: I don’t have to tell you about the importance of spending time together. Out of sight out of mind. When you spend time with your loved ones, be sure to give undivided attention to each other. E.g., Back in the days, I have known a married couple, both working full time, they would eat T.V. dinners together watching news on T.V. at their dining table. No communication. Nothing to talk about. Sadly, they divorced.

Nowadays, young couples communicate with smartphones texting each other even in their beds. That's not good, either.

E.g. 2., A son was a star-quarterback in his high school football team. His dad never showed up at his son's games, not even once. So, next time, if your son wants to play a game or any sport with you, don't refuse. Drop everything and play with him. One thing is for sure: by doing so, you will fill up his emotional tank and he will remember and appreciate it for a long time. The next love language is...

Physical Touch: This one includes sex/hugs/holding hands. Some of us love hugs. Others avoid hugs by all means, because physical touch is not their thing. But there's a sure merit to it. Even when Jesus gave a special blessing to the children, He laid his hands on each of them and wrapped them around with his hugs. E.g., Miura Ayako (Japanese novelist and Christian author): right after WWII, in her 20s and she was still single, she contracted tuberculosis that attacked her spine (known as 'caries of the spine' or Pott disease). Because of her condition, she was confined to bed for 13 years, "*seven of them in a body cast that restricted all movement*" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayako_Miura). During this time, she married a wonderful Christian man whose name was Miura Mitsuyo. In her book, she wrote about her marriage life: basically, devoid of all sexual relationships, yet holding her hand with her husband sufficed her need of love. The last love language is...

Acts of Service: Simply put, this means, "Talk is cheap. Show me your action!" The husband can say to his wife a million times, "I love you." The wife replies, "If you truly love me, help me with house chores. Here's the vacuum cleaner!" The Bible puts this way: "*Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action*" (1 John 3:18). It also puts this way in James: "*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?"*" (James 2:14-16).

Conclusion

Case Study 1: a pastor couple of 17 years of marriage. Their love languages were different: the husband's language was 'words of affirmation.' The wife's was 'gifts.' After years of expressing their love for each other in their own love language, instead of the other's, they always felt that something was missing in their marriage. For instance, to make her husband happy, the wife would buy gifts for him on every single special occasion: birthdays, anniversaries, and Christmas. Even matching neckties for Sunday suits! All those gifts without one single word of affirmation! The husband always thought to himself that those gifts were a waste of money.

What about the other side? The husband believed that his wife needed words of affirmation. So he would tell her everyday how much she meant to him; how precious and

beautiful she was. All the words of affirmation without buying one single gift! Such practices went on for 17 years! Then, one day, they realized their mistake--- speaking different love languages---so they started communicating in their spouse's language, rather than in their own: the wife now tells her husband how great the sermon was on Sundays. The husband begins to get something special for his wife. So, their marriage has improved, and they are still happily married.

Case Study 2. In my family, my cat's love language is 'physical touch and food!' My love language is 'words of affirmation.' My wife's is 'acts of service' [results are important]. My daughter's is 'quality time.' My daughter cherishes every moment we spend time together. She still talks about all the Bedtime Stories that I told her many nights when she was young. She also remembers the times that we watched movies together with popcorns.

So, here are the action points for us.

Action points: This week, take some time to analyze your loved ones' complaints, identify their love languages, and start loving them in their love languages, not in yours, in order to fill up their emotional tanks.

Here's some practice run: identify the love language of each person following. All examples are taken from Costco's monthly magazine. To the question of "How do you let people know you love them?" 1. Pat says, "*I tell them I love them each time I talk with them. Life is too short to not let them know*" (Pat Almond Hoyland Smith). 2. Patricia says, "*By cooking their favorite food and telling them every day that I love them*" (Patricia Reitsma). 3. Tanaura says, "*I tell people all the time I love them! There's never a bad time to say it. I also share little gifts I pick up when I see something they might like. No special occasion required!*" (Tanaura Seon). 4. David says, "*By being there for them through good and bad times*" (David Pinheiro). 5. Ron says, "*I buy them Costco memberships.*" (Ron Elliott) [Costco Connection, February 2025, p. 21].

One more. Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). His love language is "Action." By the way, you may discover that some people's love languages are more than one, such as, 'spending time' and 'gifts' and so forth. That's fine. Just begin with their primary one.

Also, do it out of a sincere and selfless heart (1 Corinthians 16:14). When you do it out of sincerity, before long, the recipients will appreciate your love for them, they will start giving back their love to you, and you will see the positive changes in your relationships. Let God be praised!

Amen.

Notes: God has been practicing all five love languages since the beginning. In fact, He is the one who created all these languages. Here are some examples. 1. **Words of Affirmation**---Our heavenly Father says to us, “You are my beloved child” (Mark 1:11). In His love, He takes great delight in you. He rejoices over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17). 2. **Gift Giving**---He bestows on us the gift of life (1 Peter 3:7, Acts 3:15), the gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8), the gift of grace (Ephesians 3:7), the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1), and most of all, He gives us Christ the best and eternal gift to all! 3. **Quality Time**---He is always with us (Matthew 28:20). He is our Immanuel. It can’t be any better than that! 4. **Physical Touch**---Jesus touched the leper (Matthew 8:3). He touched the blind’s eyes (Matthew 9:3). He also hugged children (Mark 10:16). 5. **Acts of Service**---He demonstrated (still does) His love for humanity in Jesus. He provides our needs and sustains us daily. He daily loads us with benefits (Psalm 68:19).

Example of **‘Words of Affirmation’**: Japanese pseudoscientist experimented with three cups of rice filled with water for a month. To each cup, He spoke every day. To the first one, “I love you. You look great today!” To the second one, he didn’t say a thing. He just ignored it. To the third cup, he said, “I hate you. You look ugly. Go away!” He repeated those words for 30 days. A month later, each cup of rice turned to something different. The first cup that received his words of affirmation turned into sweet wine, the second one, the one that was ignored and treated invisible, turned into dark grayish mold, and the third cup that received hurtful words turned into totally black.