

LANGUAGE OF LOVE

Love is arguably the most important word in any language. And the most confusing. We love baseball, apple pie, Chevrolet and a woman. Sometimes in that order!

Psychologists say the need to feel loved is a primary human emotional need. Inside each of us is an emotional tank that's waiting to be filled with love.

TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

Do you ever feel that there's a disconnect between you and a spouse, family member or friend while you're doing your darnedest to express your love, but it just isn't being received or understood? Then one day you discover that you've been speaking in English, while the other person understands only Hungarian!! If this has happened to you, where do you think the train went off the track?

(DISCUSSION)

Why is learning to express our love to others such a big deal?

"28 One of the religion scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: 'Which is most important of all the commandments?' 29 Jesus said, 'The first in importance is, "Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; 30 so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy." 31 And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment that ranks with these.'" (Mark 9:29-31)

Simon and Garfunkel taught us fifty ways to leave your lover. Now let's learn five ways to be successful communicators of love. If we're to

effectively convey our love to someone, we must learn that person's "love language." This may well be the key to having a long-lasting, loving relationship.

Liz and I have often heard Gary Chapman speak at several of our Pro Athletes Outreach conferences. This veteran counselor has identified five basic ways that we express our love.

Gary's book, *THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES*, has sold two million copies and gives us a quick Berlitz course in these tongues.

1. WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Mark Twain said, "I can live for two months on a good compliment."

James, one of Jesus' blood brothers, writes:

"3 A **bit** in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. 4 A small **rudder** on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds. 5 A **word** out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything – or destroy it! It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. 6 A careless or wrongly placed **word** out of your mouth can do that. By our **speech** we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell. 7 This is scary: You can tame a tiger, 8 but you can't tame a **tongue**—it's never been done. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer. 9 With our **tongues** we bless God our Father; with the same **tongues** we curse the very men and women he made in his image. 10 Curses and blessings out of the same **mouth!** My friends, this can't go on." (James 3:3-10)

If words are your primary love language, you thrive on receiving compliments and encouragements that build you up. Kindness lets past failures remain in the past because forgiveness is not a feeling; it's

a commitment of love. Love always humbly requests, never demands.

2. QUALITY TIME

Quality implies togetherness, not just proximity, but focused attentiveness and *quality* conversation wherein we really *listen*.

Men are trained to analyze and solve problems right NOW! But marriage, friendships or family relationships are not projects to be completed or problems to be solved.

When we communicate our love via Quality Time, we:

- a. Maintain eye contact.
- b. Focus on the other person, not multi-tasking.
- c. Listen for that person's feelings.
- d. Observe that person's body language.
- e. Don't interrupt.
- f. Engage in self-revelation talk.
- g. Be patient and attentive, even with Dead Seas or Babbling Brooks.
- h. Participate in Quality Activities to create great memories.

3. RECEIVING GIFTS

Gifts say, "I was thinking of you." Becoming a gift giver is one of the easiest love languages to learn. One of the most powerful gifts you can give someone who has this love language is your physical presence during a crisis.

4. ACTS OF SERVICE

These are things the receiver would like you to do, not always things *you'd* like to do.

Ironically, your spouse's/child's/friend's criticisms of your behavior are the best clue to *their* primary love dialect. Criticism is a roughshod way of pleading for your expression of love. Carping like "How come you never rake the leaves?"

5. PHYSICAL TOUCH

Babies who are held, hugged and kissed develop a healthier emotional life than those with little or no physical contact.

Tiny, tactile receptors throughout your body carry nerve impulses to your brain where they're interpreted as pain or pleasure, love or hate. Appropriate physical touch can make or break a relationship.

Those who have Quality Touch as their primary love language can survive crises if they're given this gift. Not receiving it may never be forgotten.

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR EMOTIONAL LOVE LANGUAGE:

What does your spouse/child/friend fail to do that hurts you most deeply? What do you need most from that person? How do you regularly express your love? Your answers point to probably what would make you feel most loved.

THE MASTER OF ALL FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES

God the Father sent to earth His only Son, Jesus, not just to be our Savior, but to be our Example.

As God, Jesus is perfect and loves us perfectly in all five love languages...and more!

Words of Affirmation

"1 Going through a long line of prophets, God has been addressing our ancestors in different ways for centuries. 2 Recently he spoke to us directly through his Son. By his Son, God created the world in the beginning, and it will all belong to the Son at the end. 3 This Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature. He holds everything together by what he says—powerful words! After he finished the sacrifice for sins, the Son took his honored place high in the heavens right alongside God..." (Hebrew 1:1-3)

"1 The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, 2 in readiness for God from day one. 3 Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!—came into being without him. 4 What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. 5 The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out." (John 1:1-5)

Quality Time

Jesus said, "16 I will talk to the Father, and he'll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. 17 This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world can't take him in because it doesn't have eyes to see him, doesn't know what to look for. But you know him already because he has been staying with you, and will even be in you! 18 I will not leave you orphaned. I'm coming back. 19 In just a little while the world will no longer see me, but you're going to see me because I am alive and you're about to come alive. 20 At that moment you will know absolutely that I'm in my Father, and you're in me, and I'm in you." (John 14:16-20)

Speaking to His disciples, Jesus said, "20 And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b)

Receiving Gifts

"23 Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is real life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master." (Romans 6:23)

"15 Thank God for his Son—a gift too wonderful for words!" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

"25 Jesus told (His friend Martha), 'I am the resurrection and the life.[1] Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. 26 They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?" (John 11:25-26)

Acts of Service

"33 (Jesus and His disciples) came to Capernaum. When he was safe at home, he asked them, "What were you discussing on the road?" 34 The silence was deafening—they had been arguing with one another over who among them was greatest. 35 He sat down and summoned the Twelve. 'So you want first place? Then take the last place. Be the servant of all.'" (Mark 9:33-35)

"28 That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for the many who are held hostage." (Matthew 20:28)

Physical Touch

"13 One day children were brought to Jesus in the hope that he would lay hands on them and pray over them. The disciples shooed them off. 14 But Jesus intervened: "Let the children alone, don't prevent them from coming to me. God's kingdom is made up of people like these." 15 After laying hands on them, he left." (Matthew 19:13-15)

"40 A leper came to him, begging on his knees, 'If you want to, you can cleanse me.' 41 Deeply moved, Jesus put out his hand, touched him, and said, 'I want to. Be clean.' 42 Then and there the leprosy was gone, his skin smooth and healthy." (Mark 1:40-42)

Lepers were total outcasts in the first century. No one would touch or come near them. They were forced to live outside the city walls. But then, as now, Christ comes to us, while we are unrepentant sinners, offering to cleanse us from our sins by accepting His free offer of forgiveness.

Have you, like the leper, asked for His touch yet?

Concepts taken from *THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES*, Gary Chapman, Northfield Publishing, 1992, 1995

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2. QUALITY TIME

3. RECEIVING GIFTS

4. ACTS OF SERVICE

5. PHYSICAL TOUCH

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