

# The Five Love Languages

By Gary Chapman

- The desire for romantic love in marriage is deeply rooted in our psychological makeup.
- We must be willing to learn our spouse's primary love language if we are to be effective communicators of love.
- People speak different love languages.
  - Ex. A man was constantly affirming words to his wife when he told her how beautiful she was, he loved her, how proud he was to be her husband. He was speaking love and he was sincere, but she did not understand his language. Maybe she was looking for love in his behavior and didn't see it. Being sincere is not enough.
- We tend to speak our primary emotional love language and we become confused when our spouse does not understand what we are communicating.
- If we want our spouse to feel the love we are trying to communicate, we must express it in their primary love language.
- The Bible says a husband and wife became "one flesh". That didn't mean the individuals would lose their identity; it meant that they would enter into each other's lives in a deep and intimate way.
- Could it be that deep inside hurting couples exists an invisible "emotional love tank" with its gauge on empty? Could the misbehavior, withdrawal, harsh words, and critical spirit occur because of that empty tank? If we could find a way to fill it, could the marriage be reborn? With a full tank would couples be able to create an emotional climate where it is possible to discuss differences and resolve conflicts? Could that tank be the key that makes marriage work?
- At its peak, the "in love" experience is euphoric. We are emotionally obsessed with each other.
- Once the experience of falling in love has run its natural course (remember, the average in-love experience lasts 2 years), we will return to the world of reality and begin to assert ourselves. He will express his desires, but his desires will be different from hers. He desires sex, but she is too tired. He wants to buy a new car, but she says, "That's absurd!" She wants to visit her parents, but he says, "I don't like spending so much time with your family." He wants to play in the softball tournament, and she says, "You love softball more than you love me." Little by little, the illusion of intimacy evaporates, and the individual desires, emotions, thoughts, and behavior patterns exert themselves. They are two individuals. Their minds have not melted together, and their emotions mingled only briefly in the ocean of love. Now the waves of reality begin to separate them. They fall out of love, and at that point either they withdraw, separate, divorce, and set off in search of a new in-love experience, or they begin the hard work of learning to love each other without the euphoria of the in-love obsession.
- Real love unites reason and emotion. It involves an act of the will and requires discipline, and it recognizes the need for personal growth. Our most basic emotional need is not to fall in love but to be genuinely loved by another, to know

- a love that grows out of reason and choice, not instinct. I need to be loved by someone who chooses to love me, who sees in me something worth loving.
- That kind of love requires effort and discipline.
  - The emotional need for love must be met if we are to have emotional health. We feel secure when we are assured that our mate accepts us, wants us, and is committed to our well-being.
  - When your spouse's emotional love tank is full and he feels secure in your love, the whole world looks bright and your spouse will move out to reach his highest potential in life. But when the love tank is empty and he feels used but not loved, the whole world looks dark and he will likely never reach his potential for good in the world.
  
  - **Love Language #1: Words of Affirmation** – One way to express love emotionally is to use words that build up. Solomon wrote, “The tongue has the power of life and death.”
  - The object of love is not getting something you want but doing something for the well-being of the one you love. It is a fact, however, that when we receive affirming words we are far more likely to be motivated to reciprocate.
  - Giving verbal compliments is only one way to express words of affirmation to your spouse. Another dialect is encouraging words.
  - Encouragement requires empathy and seeing the world from your spouse's perspective. We must first learn what is important to our spouse.
  - Most of us have more potential than we will ever develop. What holds us back is often courage. A loving spouse can supply that all-important catalyst.
  - Love is kind. Speak kind words.
  - When your spouse is angry and upset and lashing out words of heat, if you choose to be loving you will not reciprocate with additional heat but with a soft voice. You will receive what he is saying as information about his emotional feelings. You will let him tell you of his hurt, anger, and perception of events. You will seek to put yourself in his shoes and see the event through his eyes and then express softly and kindly your understanding of why he feels that way. If you have wronged him, you will be willing to confess the wrong and ask forgiveness. If your motivation is different from what he is reading, you will be able to explain your motivation kindly. You will seek understanding and reconciliation, and not to prove your own perception as the only logical way to interpret what has happened. That is mature love-love to which we aspire if we seek a growing marriage.
  - The best thing we can do with the failures of the past is to let them be history. We cannot erase the past, but we can accept it as history. We can choose to live today free from the failures of yesterday. Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a commitment.
  - Love makes requests, not demands. The way we express those desires, however, is all-important. If they come across as demands, we have erased the possibility of intimacy and will drive our spouse away. If, however, we make known our needs and desires as requests, we are giving guidance, not ultimatums. Your mate may choose to respond to your request or to deny it, because love is always a

choice. That's what makes it meaningful. To know that my spouse loves me enough to respond to one of my requests communicates emotionally that she cares about me, respects me, admires me, and wants to do something to please me. Ex.: "You know those apple pies you make? Would it be possible for you to make one this week? I love those apple pies."

- **Love Language #2 : Quality Time** – Giving someone your undivided attention.
- Remember that what makes one person feel loved emotionally is not always the thing that makes another person feel loved emotionally.
- A central aspect of quality time is togetherness. Togetherness has to do with focused attention. It means we are doing something together and that we are giving our full attention to the other person.
- Spending time together in a common pursuit communicates that you care about each other, that you enjoy being with each other, that you like to do things together.
- Quality time can mean spending time together sharing quality conversation. That is sympathetic dialogue where two individuals are sharing their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires in a friendly, uninterrupted context. If a spouse's primary love language is quality time, such dialogue is crucial to his or her emotional sense of being loved.
- Many men are trained to analyze problems and create solutions. We forget that marriage is a relationship, not a project to be completed or a problem to solve. A relationship calls for sympathetic listening with a view to understanding the other person's thoughts, feelings, and desires. We must be willing to give advice but only when it is requested and never in a condescending manner.
- Practical tips when developing the art of listening:
  1. Maintain eye contact when your spouse is talking.
  2. Don't listen to your spouse and do something else at the same time.
  3. Listen for feelings.
  4. Observe body language.
  5. Refuse to interrupt.
- One way to learn new patterns is to establish a daily sharing time in which each of you will talk about three things that happened to you that day and how you feel about them.
- Quality activities may include anything in which one or both of you has an interest. The emphasis is not on what you are doing but on why you are doing it. The purpose is to experience something together, to walk away from it feeling "He cares about me. He was willing to do something with me that I enjoy, and he did it with a positive attitude." That is love, and for some people it is love's loudest voice.
- **Love Language #3: Receiving Gifts** – 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 a symbol of that thought. It doesn't matter whether it costs money. What is important is that you thought of him.

- Visual symbols of love are more important to some people than to others. That's why individuals have different attitudes toward wedding rings. Some never take the ring off after the wedding. Others don't even wear a wedding band. That is another sign that people have different primary love languages. If receiving gifts is my primary love language, I will place great value on the ring you have given me and I will wear it with great pride. I will also be greatly moved emotionally by other gifts that you give through the years. I will see them as expressions of love. Without gifts as visual symbols, I may question your love.
- Gifts come in all sizes, colors, and shapes. Some are expensive, and others are free. Gifts may be purchased, found, or made.
- If you discover that your spouse's primary love language is receiving gifts, then perhaps you will understand that purchasing gifts for him or her is the best investment you can make. You are investing in your relationship and filling your love's emotional love tank, and with a full love tank, he or she will likely reciprocate emotional love to you in a language you will understand.
- When both person's emotional needs are met, your marriage will take on a whole new dimension.
- There is an intangible gift that sometimes speaks more loudly than a gift that can be held in one's hand. I call it the gift of self or the gift of presence. Being there when your spouse needs you speaks loudly to the one whose primary love language is receiving gifts.
- Physical presence in the time of crisis is the most powerful gift you can give if your spouse's primary love language is receiving gifts.
  
- **Love Language #4: Acts of Service**- Doing things you know your spouse would like you to do. Such actions as cooking a meal, setting a table, washing dishes, vacuuming, cleaning the bathroom, getting hairs out of the sink, getting bugs off the windshield, taking out the garbage, changing the baby's diaper, painting a bedroom, dusting the bookcase, keeping the car in operating condition, washing or vacuuming the car, cleaning the garage, mowing the grass, trimming the shrubs, dusting the blinds, and changing the cat's litter box are all acts of service. They require thought, planning, time, effort, and energy.
- My spouse's criticisms about my behavior provide me with the clearest clue to her primary love language. People tend to criticize their spouse most loudly in the area where they themselves have the deepest emotional need. Their criticism is an ineffective way of pleading for love.
- Learning the love language of acts of service will require some of us to reexamine our stereotypes of the roles of husbands and wives.
  
- **Love Language #5: Physical Touch**- Physical touch is a powerful vehicle for communicating marital love. Holding hands, kissing, embracing, and sexual intercourse are all ways of communicating emotional love to one's spouse.
- For some individuals, physical touch is their primary love language. Without it, they feel unloved. With it, their emotional tank is filled, and they feel secure in the love of their spouse.

- Love touches may be explicit and demand your full attention such as in a back rub or sexual foreplay, culminating in intercourse. On the other hand, love touches may be implicit and require only a moment, such as putting your hand on his shoulder as you pour a cup of coffee or rubbing your body against him as you pass in the kitchen.
- The most important thing you can do for your mate in a time of crisis is to love him or her. If your spouse's primary love language is physical touch, nothing is more important than holding her as she cries. Your words may mean little, but your physical touch will communicate that you care. Crises provide a unique opportunity for expressing love. Your tender touches will be remembered long after the crisis has passed. Your failure to touch may never be forgotten.
- **Discovering Your Primary Love Language:**
  1. What does your spouse do or fail to do that hurts you most deeply? The opposite of what hurts you most is probably your love language.
  2. What have you most often requested of your spouse? The thing you have most often requested is likely the thing that would make you feel most loved.
  3. In what way do you regularly express love to your spouse? Your method of expressing love may be an indication that that would also make you feel loved.
- Two kinds of people may have difficulty discovering their primary love language. The first is the individual whose emotional love tank has been full for a long time. Her spouse has expressed love in many ways, and she is not certain which of those ways makes her feel most loved. She simply knows that she is loved. The second is the individual whose love tank has been empty for so long that he doesn't remember what makes him feel loved. In either case, if you can go back to the experience of falling in love and ask yourself, "What did I like about my spouse in those days? What did he do or say that made me desire to be with him?" If you can conjure up those memories, it will give you some idea of your primary love language.
- Another approach to finding your primary love language is to ask yourself, "What would be an ideal spouse to me? If I could have the perfect mate, what would she be like?" Your picture of a perfect mate should give you some idea of your primary love language.
- Spend some time writing down what you think is your primary love language. Then list the other four in order of importance. Also write down what you think is the primary love language of your spouse. You may also list the other four in order of importance if you wish. Sit down with your spouse and discuss what you guessed to be his/her primary love language. Then tell each other what you consider to be your own primary love language.
- Love is a choice: Poor choices in the past don't mean that we must make them in the future. Instead we can say, "I'm sorry. I know I have hurt you, but I would like to make the future different. I would like to love you in your language. I would like to meet your needs." Marriages can be rescued from the brink of divorce when couples make the choice to love.

- Love doesn't erase the past, but it makes the future different. When we choose active expressions of love in the primary love language of our spouse, we create an emotional climate where we can deal with our past conflicts and failures.
- Meeting my wife's need for love is a choice I make each day. If I know her primary love language and choose to speak it, her deepest emotional need will be met and she will feel secure in my love.
- Love is something we do for someone else, not something you do for yourself. We discover the primary love language of our spouse, and we choose to speak it whether it is natural for us. We are not claiming to have warm, excited feelings. We are simply choosing to do it for his or her benefit.
- We want to meet our spouse's emotional need, and we reach out to speak his love language. In so doing, his emotional love tank is filled and chances are he will reciprocate and speak our language. When he does our emotions return, and our love tank begins to fill.
- Love is a choice and either partner can start the process today.
- **Loving the Unlovely**: When the emotional tank is low...we have no love feelings toward our spouse but simply experience emptiness and pain.
- Perhaps you need a miracle in your marriage. Try this experiment. Tell your spouse that you have been thinking about your marriage and have decided that you would like to do a better job of meeting his/her needs. Ask for suggestions on how you could improve. His suggestions will be a clue to his primary love language. If he makes no suggestions, guess his love language based on the things he has complained about over the years. Then, for six months, focus your attention on that love language. At the end of each month, ask your spouse for feedback on how you are doing and for further suggestions. Whenever your spouse indicates that he is seeing improvement, wait one week and then make a specific request. The request should be something you really want him to do for you. If he chooses to do it, you will know that he is responding to your needs. If he does not honor your request, continue to love him. Maybe next month he will respond positively. If your spouse starts speaking your love language by responding to your requests, your positive emotions toward him will return, and in time your marriage will be reborn.
- When the love tank is full, we create a climate of friendliness, a climate that seeks to understand, that is willing to allow differences and to negotiate problems. I am convinced that no single area of marriage affects the rest of marriage as much as meeting the emotional need for love.

## Children and Love Languages

By Gary Chapman

- If you observe children's behavior, you can learn their primary love language rather early.
- Bobby is six years old. When his father comes home from work, Bobby jumps into his lap, reaches up and messes up his father's hair. What is Bobby saying to his father? "I want to be touched." He is touching his father because he wants to be touched. Bobby's primary love language is likely "**Physical Touch**".
- Patrick is 5 ½ years old. When his dad comes home from work he says excitedly, "Come here, Daddy. I want to show you something. Come here." His father says, "Just a minute, Patrick, I want to look at the paper." Patrick leaves for a moment but is back in fifteen seconds saying, "Daddy, come to my room. I want to show you now, Daddy. I want to show you now." His father replies, "Just a minute, son. Let me finish reading." Sixty seconds later, Patrick is back to his father and instead of saying anything, he jumps into his father's paper, laughing. His father says, "What are you doing, Patrick?" Patrick says, "I want you to come to my room, Daddy. I want to show you what I made." What is Patrick requesting? "**Quality Time**". He wants his father's undivided attention, and he won't stop until he gets it, even if he must create a scene.
- If your child is often making presents for you, wrapping them up and giving them to you with a special glee in his or her eye, your child's primary love language is probably, "**Receiving Gifts**." He gives to you because he desires to receive.
- If you observe your son or daughter always trying to help a younger brother or sister, it probably means that his or her primary love language is "**Acts of Service**."
- All of that is on the subconscious level for the child. Her behavior is motivated by her own emotional desires. Perhaps she has learned by experience that when she does or says certain things, she typically receives certain responses from her parents. Thus, she does or says that which results in getting her own emotional needs met. If all goes well and their emotional needs are met, children develop into responsible adults. But if the emotional need is not met, they may violate acceptable standards, expressing anger toward parents who did not meet their needs, and seeking love in inappropriate places.
- Parents can sincerely love their children (most do), but sincerity is not enough. We must learn to speak the primary love language of our children if we are to meet their emotional need for love.
- **Words of Affirmation**: Parents typically give many affirming words when the child is young. Even before the child understands verbal communication, parents are saying, "What a pretty nose, what beautiful eyes, what curly hair," and so on. Why is it that as the child gets older, our "Words of Affirmation" turn to words of condemnation? When the child is seven we walk into the room and tell him to put the toys in the toy box. Twelve toys are on the floor. We come back in five minutes and seven toys are in the box, and what do we say? "I told you to get these toys up. If you don't get these toys up, I am going to-". As the child

- gets older, we tend to condemn him for his failures rather than commend him for his successes.
- To a child whose primary love language is “Words of Affirmation,” our negative, critical, demeaning words strike terror to her psyche. Adults struggle with self esteem and feel unloved all their lives when their primary love language is violated in such a detrimental manner.
  - **Quality Time**: Quality time means giving a child undivided attention. For the small child, it means sitting on the floor and rolling a ball back and forth with him. You may be into computers as an adult, but your child lives in a child’s world. As the child gets older and develops new interests, you must enter into those interests if you want to meet his needs. Giving a child your undivided attention says that you care, that he is important to you, that you enjoy being with him.
  - If “Quality Time” is the primary love language of your child and you speak that language, chances are he will allow you to spend quality time with him even through the adolescent years. If you do not give him quality time in the younger years, he will likely seek the attention of peers during the adolescent years and turn away from parents who may at that time desperately desire more time with their children.
  - **Receiving Gifts**: If parents have the money, they tend to buy many gifts for their children. Some parents believe that that is the best way to show love. Some parents try to do for their children what their parents were unable to do for them. But unless that is the primary love language of the child, gifts may mean little emotionally to the child. The parent has good intentions, but he/she is not meeting the emotional needs of the child by giving gifts.
  - If the gifts you give are quickly laid aside, if the child seldom says “thank you,” if the child does not take care of the gifts that you have given, if she does not prize those gifts, chances are “Receiving Gifts” is not her primary love language. If, on the other hand, your child responds to you with much thanksgiving, if she shows others the gift, if she takes care of the gift, if she puts it in a place of prominence in her room and keeps it polished, if she plays with it often over an extended period of time, then perhaps “Receiving Gifts” is her primary love language.
  - **Acts of Service**: If your child is expressing appreciation for ordinary acts of service, that is a clue that they are emotionally important to him or her. Your acts of service are communicating love in a meaningful way. When you help them with a science project, it means more than a good grade. It means “My parent loves me.” When you fix a bicycle, you do more than get him back on wheels. You send him away with a full tank.
  - If your child consistently offers to help you with your work projects, it probably means that in his mind that is a way of expressing love, and “Acts of Service” likely is his primary love language.
  - **Physical Touch**: We have long known that “Physical Touch” is an emotional communicator to children. Naturally many parents and other adults pick up an infant, hold it, cuddle it, kiss it, squeeze it, and speak silly words to it. Long before the child understands the meaning of the word love, she feels loved.

Hugging, kissing, patting, holding hands are all ways of communicating love to a child.

- The hugging and kissing of a teenager will differ from the hugging and kissing of an infant. Your teenager may not appreciate such behavior in the presence of peers, but that doesn't mean that he does not want to be touched, especially if it is his primary love language.
- If your teenager is regularly coming up behind you and grabbing your arms, lightly pushing you, grabbing you by the ankle when you walk through the room, tripping you, those are all indications that "Physical Touch" is important to him.
- Observe your children. Watch how they express love to others. That is a clue to their love language. Take note of the things they request of you. Many times, their request will be in keeping with their own love language. Notice the things for which they are most appreciative. Those are likely indicators of their primary love language.
- As parents, we often try to pour all of our children into the same mold. We go to parenting conferences or read books on parenting, get some wonderful ideas and want to go home and practice with each child. The problem is that each child is different, and what communicates love to one child does not communicate love to another.
- We must learn to speak our children's language if we want them to feel loved.
- It is never too late to express love. If you have older children and realize that you have been speaking the wrong love language, why not tell them? "You know, I have been reading a book on how to express love, and I realize that I have not been expressing my love to you in the best way through the years. I have tried to show you my love by \_\_\_\_\_, but I'm now realizing that that probably has not communicated love to you, that your love language is probably something different. I am beginning to think that your love language is probably \_\_\_\_\_. You know, I really do love you, and I hope that in the future I can express it to you in better ways."
- When family members start speaking each other's primary love language, the emotional climate of a family is greatly enhanced.