



THE *5* *love*
LANGUAGES[®]

*The Secret to Love
That Lasts*

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

Gary Chapman

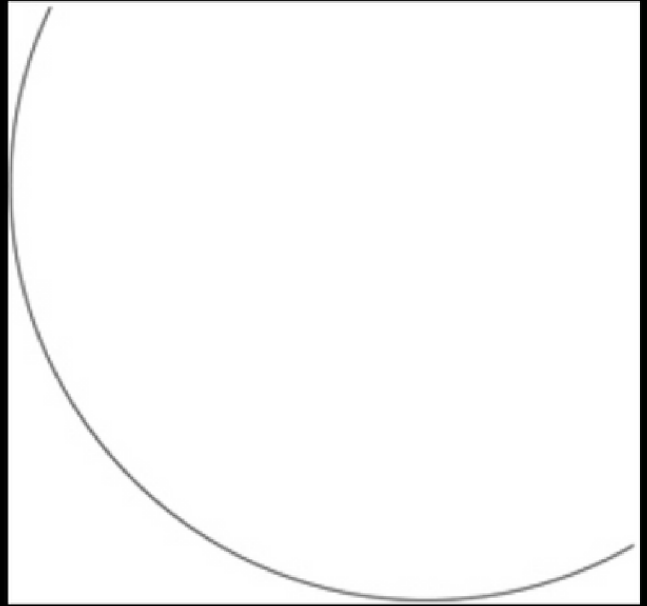
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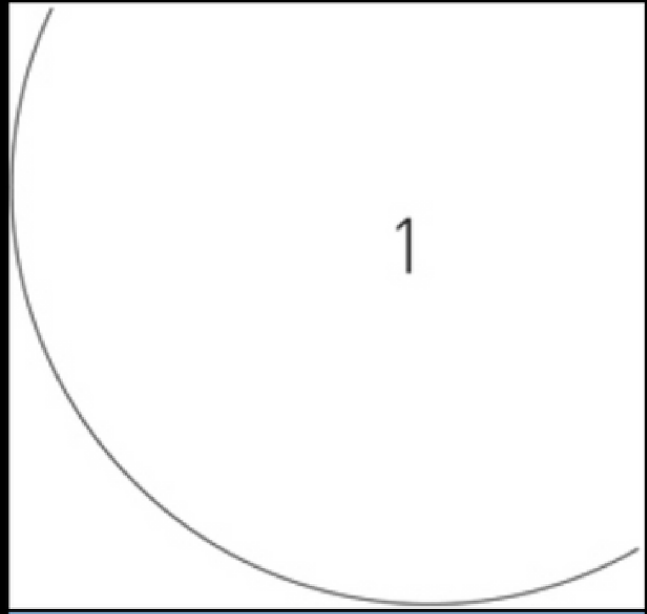
CHICAGO



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What Happens to Love *After the Wedding?*

At 30,000 feet, somewhere between Buffalo and Dallas, he put his magazine in his seat pocket, turned in my direction, and asked, “What kind of work do you do?”

“I do marriage counseling and lead marriage enrichment seminars,” I said matter-of-factly.

“I’ve been wanting to ask someone this for a long time,” he said. “What happens to the love after you get married?”

Relinquishing my hopes of getting a nap, I asked, “What do you mean?”

“Well,” he said, “I’ve been married three times, and each time, it was wonderful before we got married, but somehow after the wedding it all fell apart. All the love I thought I had for her and the

love she seemed to have for me evaporated. I am a fairly intelligent person. I operate a successful business, but I don't understand it."

"How long were you married?" I asked.

"The first one lasted about ten years. The second time, we were married three years, and the last one, almost six years."

"Did your love evaporate immediately after the wedding, or was it a gradual loss?" I inquired.

"Well, the second one went wrong from the very beginning. I don't know what happened. I really thought we loved each other, but the honeymoon was a disaster, and we never recovered. We only dated six months. It was a whirlwind romance. It was really exciting! But after the marriage, it was a battle from the beginning.

"In my first marriage, we had three or four good years before the baby came. After the baby was born, I felt like she gave her attention to the baby and I no longer mattered. It was as if her one goal in life was to have a baby, and after the baby, she no longer needed me."

"Did you tell her that?" I asked.

"Yes, I told her. She said I was crazy. She said I did not understand the stress of being a twenty-four-hour nurse. She said I should be more understanding and help her more. I really tried, but it didn't seem to make any difference. After that, we just grew further apart. After a while, there was no love left, just deadness. Both of us agreed that the marriage was over.

"My last marriage? I really thought that one would be different. I had been divorced for three years. We dated each other for two years. I really thought we knew what we were doing, and I thought that perhaps for the first time I really knew what it meant to love someone. I genuinely felt that she loved me.

“After the wedding, I don’t think I changed. I continued to express love to her as I had before marriage. I told her how beautiful she was. I told her how much I loved her. I told her how proud I was to be her husband. But a few months after marriage, she started complaining; about petty things at first—like my not taking the garbage out or not hanging up my clothes. Later, she went to attacking my character, telling me she didn’t feel she could trust me, accusing me of not being faithful to her. She became a totally negative person. Before marriage, she was never negative. She was one of the most positive people I have ever met—that’s one of the things that attracted me to her. She never complained about anything. Everything I did was wonderful, but once we were married, it seemed I could do nothing right. I honestly don’t know what happened. Eventually, I lost my love for her and began to resent her. She obviously had no love for me. We agreed there was no benefit to our living together any longer, so we split.

“That was a year ago. So my question is, What happens to love after the wedding? Is my experience common? Is that why we have so many divorces in our country? I can’t believe that it happened to me three times. And those who don’t divorce, do they learn to live with the emptiness, or does love really stay alive in some marriages? If so, how?”

The questions my friend seated in 5A was asking are the questions that thousands of married and divorced persons are asking today. Some are asking friends, some are asking counselors and clergy, and some are asking themselves. Sometimes the answers are couched in psychological research jargon that is almost incomprehensible. Sometimes they are couched in humor and folklore. Most of the jokes and pithy sayings contain some truth, but they are like offering an aspirin to a person with cancer.

The desire for romantic love in marriage is deeply rooted in our psychological makeup. Books abound on the subject. Television and radio talk shows deal with it. The Internet is full of advice. So are our parents and friends and churches. Keeping love alive in our marriages is serious business.

With all the help available from media experts, why is it that so few couples seem to have found the secret to keeping love alive after the wedding? Why is it that a couple can attend a communication workshop, hear wonderful ideas on how to enhance communication, return home, and find themselves totally unable to implement the communication patterns demonstrated? How is it that we read something online on “101 Ways to Express Love to Your Spouse,” select two or three ways that seem especially helpful, try them, and our spouse doesn’t even acknowledge our effort? We give up on the other 98 ways and go back to life as usual.

THE TRUTH WE’RE MISSING

The answer to those questions is the purpose of this book. It is not that the books and articles already published are not helpful. The problem is that we have overlooked one fundamental truth: People speak different love languages.

My academic training is in the area of anthropology. Therefore, I have studied in the area of linguistics, which identifies a number of major language groups: Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, English, Portuguese, Arabic, Greek, German, French, and so on. Most of us grow up learning the language of our parents and siblings, which becomes our *primary* or native tongue. Later, we may learn additional languages—but usually with much more effort. These become our *secondary* languages. We speak and understand best our native language. We feel most comfortable speaking that

language. The more we use a secondary language, the more comfortable we become conversing in it. If we speak only our primary language and encounter someone else who speaks only his or her primary language, which is different from ours, our communication will be limited. We must rely on pointing, grunting, drawing pictures, or acting out our ideas. We can communicate, but it is awkward. Language differences are part and parcel of human culture. If we are to communicate effectively across cultural lines, we must learn the language of those with whom we wish to communicate.

In the area of love, it is similar. Your emotional love language and the language of your spouse may be as different as Chinese from English. No matter how hard you try to express love in English, if your spouse understands only Chinese, you will never understand how to love each other. My friend on the plane was speaking the language of affirming words to his third wife when he said, "I told her how beautiful she was. I told her I loved her. I told her how proud I was to be her husband." He was speaking love, and he was sincere, but she did not understand his language. Perhaps she was looking for love in his behavior and didn't see it. Being sincere is not enough. We must be willing to learn our spouse's primary love language if we are to be effective communicators of love.

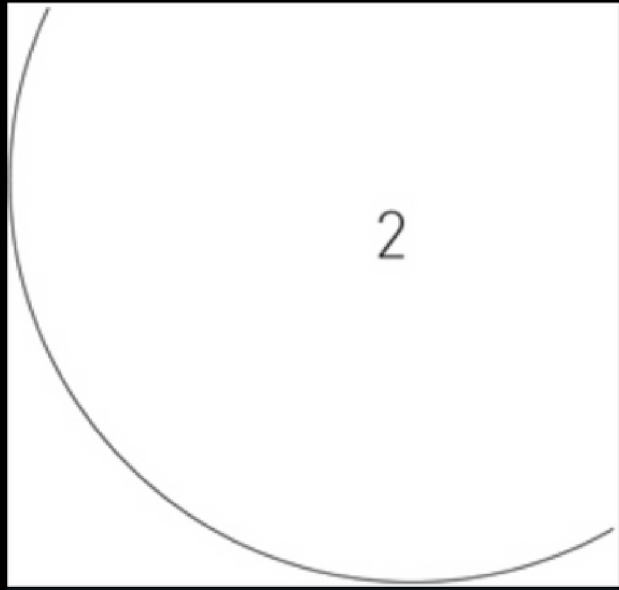
My conclusion after many years of marriage counseling is that there are five emotional love languages—five ways that people speak and understand emotional love. In the field of linguistics, a language may have numerous dialects or variations. Similarly, within the five basic emotional love languages, there are many dialects. The number of ways to express love within a love language is limited only by one's imagination. The important thing is to speak the love language of your spouse.

Seldom do a husband and wife have the same primary emotional love language. We tend to speak our primary love language, and we become confused when our spouse does not understand what we are communicating. We are expressing our love, but the message does not come through because we are speaking what, to them, is a foreign language. Therein lies the fundamental problem, and it is the purpose of this book to offer a solution. That is why I dare to write another book on love. Once we discover the five basic love languages and understand our own primary love language, as well as the primary love language of our spouse, we will then have the needed information to apply the ideas in the books and articles.

Once you identify and learn to speak your spouse's primary love language, I believe that you will have discovered the key to a long-lasting, loving marriage. Love need not evaporate after the wedding, but in order to keep it alive, most of us will have to put forth the effort to learn a secondary love language. We cannot rely on our native tongue if our spouse does not understand it. If we want them to feel the love we are trying to communicate, we must express it in their primary love language.

YOUR TURN

How does your spouse respond when you try to show affection?



Keeping the Love Tank Full

Love is the most important word in the English language—and the most confusing. Both secular and religious thinkers agree that love plays a central role in life. Love has a prominent role in thousands of books, songs, magazines, and movies. Numerous philosophical and theological systems have made a prominent place for love.

Psychologists have concluded that the need to feel loved is a primary human emotional need. For love, we will climb mountains, cross seas, traverse desert sands, and endure untold hardships. Without love, mountains become unclimbable, seas uncrossable, deserts unbearable, and hardship our lot in life.

If we can agree that the word *love* permeates human society, both historically and in the present, we must also agree that it is a most confusing word. We use it in a thousand ways. We say, “I love hot dogs,” and in the next breath, “I love my mother.” We speak of loving activities: swimming, skiing, hunting. We love objects:

food, cars, houses. We love animals: dogs, cats, even pet snails. We love nature: trees, grass, flowers, and weather. We love people: mother, father, son, daughter, parents, wives, husbands, friends. We even fall in love with love.

If all that is not confusing enough, we also use the word *love* to explain behavior. "I did it because I love her." That explanation is given for all kinds of actions. A politician is involved in an adulterous relationship, and he calls it love. The preacher, on the other hand, calls it sin. The wife of an alcoholic picks up the pieces after her husband's latest episode. She calls it love, but the psychologist calls it codependency. The parent indulges all the child's wishes, calling it love. The family therapist would call it irresponsible parenting. What is loving behavior?

The purpose of this book is not to eliminate all confusion surrounding the word *love* but to focus on that kind of love that is essential to our emotional health. Child psychologists affirm that every child has certain basic emotional needs that must be met if he is to be emotionally stable. Among those emotional needs, none is more basic than the need for love and affection, the need to sense that he or she belongs and is wanted. With an adequate supply of affection, the child will likely develop into a responsible adult. Without that love, he or she will be emotionally and socially challenged.

I liked the metaphor the first time I heard it: "Inside every child is an 'emotional tank' waiting to be filled with love. When a child really feels loved, he will develop normally, but when the love tank is empty, the child will misbehave. Much of the misbehavior of children is motivated by the cravings of an empty 'love tank.'" I was listening to Dr. Ross Campbell, a psychiatrist who specialized in the treatment of children and adolescents.

As I listened, I thought of the hundreds of parents who had paraded the misdeeds of their children through my office. I had never visualized an empty love tank inside those children, but I had certainly seen the results of it. Their misbehavior was a misguided search for the love they did not feel. They were seeking love in all the wrong places and in all the wrong ways.

I remember Ashley, who at thirteen years of age was being treated for a sexually transmitted disease. Her parents were crushed. They were angry with Ashley. They were upset with the school, which they blamed for teaching her about sex. “Why would she do this?” they asked.

In my conversation with Ashley, she told me of her parents’ divorce when she was six years old. “I thought my father left because he didn’t love me,” she said. “When my mother remarried when I was ten, I felt she now had someone to love her, but I still had no one to love me. I wanted so much to be loved. I met this boy at school. He was older than me, but he liked me. I couldn’t believe it. He was kind to me, and in a while I really felt he loved me. I didn’t want to have sex, but I wanted to be loved.”

Ashley’s “love tank” had been empty for many years. Her mother and stepfather had provided for her physical needs but had not realized the deep emotional struggle raging inside her. They certainly loved Ashley, and they thought that she felt their love. Not until it was almost too late did they discover that they were not speaking Ashley’s primary love language.

The emotional need for love, however, is not simply a childhood phenomenon. That need follows us into adulthood and into marriage. The “in-love” experience temporarily meets that need, but it is inevitably a quick fix and, as we shall learn later, has a limited and predictable life span. After we come down from the high of the “in-love” obsession, the emotional need for love resurfaces be-

cause it is fundamental to our nature. It is at the center of our emotional desires. We needed love before we “fell in love,” and we will need it as long as we live.

The need to feel loved by one’s spouse is at the heart of marital desires. A man said to me recently, “What good is the house, the cars, the place at the beach, or any of the rest of it if your wife doesn’t love you?” Do you understand what he was really saying? “More than anything, I want to be loved by my wife.” Material things are no replacement for human, emotional love. A wife says, “He ignores me all day long and then wants to jump in bed with me. I hate it.” She is not a wife who hates sex; she is a wife desperately pleading for emotional love.

OUR CRY FOR LOVE

Something in our nature cries out to be loved by another. Isolation is devastating to the human psyche. That is why solitary confinement is considered the cruelest of punishments. At the heart of humankind’s existence is the desire to be intimate and to be loved by another. Marriage is designed to meet that need for intimacy and love. That is why the ancient biblical writings spoke of the husband and wife becoming “one flesh.” That did not mean that individuals would lose their identity; it meant that they would enter into each other’s lives in a deep and intimate way.

But if love is important, it is also elusive. I have listened to many married couples share their secret pain. Some came to me because the inner ache had become unbearable. Others came because they realized that their behavior patterns or the misbehavior of their spouse was destroying the marriage. Some came simply to inform me that they no longer wanted to be married. Their dreams of “living happily ever after” had been dashed against the hard walls of reality. Again and again I have heard the words “Our love is gone;

our relationship is dead. We used to feel close, but not now. We no longer enjoy being with each other. We don't meet each other's needs." Their stories bear testimony that adults as well as children have "love tanks."

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?

Those questions sent me on a long journey. Along the way, I discovered the simple yet powerful insights contained in this book. The journey has taken me not only through years of marriage counseling but into the hearts and minds of hundreds of couples throughout America. From Seattle to Miami, couples have invited me into the inner chamber of their marriages, and we have talked openly. The illustrations included in this book are cut from the fabric of real life. Only names and places are changed to protect the privacy of the individuals who have spoken so freely.

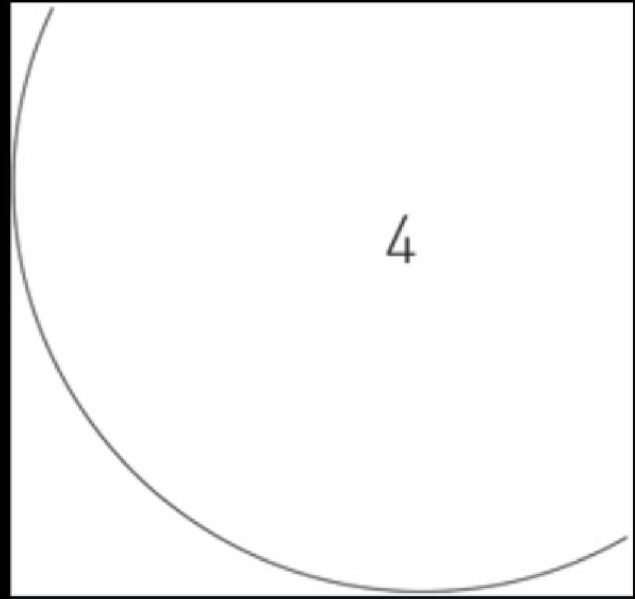
I am convinced that keeping the emotional love tank full is as important to a marriage as maintaining the proper oil level is to an automobile. Running your marriage on an empty "love tank" may cost you even more than trying to drive your car without oil. What you are about to read has the potential of saving thousands of marriages and can even enhance the emotional climate of a good marriage. Whatever the quality of your marriage now, it can always be better.

WARNING: Understanding the five love languages and learning to speak the primary love language of your spouse may radically affect his or her behavior. People behave differently when their emotional love tanks are full.

Before we examine the five love languages, however, we must address one other important but confusing phenomenon: the euphoric experience of “falling in love.”

YOUR TURN

On a scale of 0–10, how full is your love tank?



LOVE LANGUAGE # 1

Words of Affirmation

Mark Twain once said, “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” If we take Twain literally, six compliments a year would have kept his emotional love tank at the operational level. Your spouse will probably need more.

One way to express love emotionally is to use words that build up. Solomon, author of the ancient Hebrew Wisdom Literature, wrote, “The tongue has the power of life and death.”¹ Many couples have never learned the tremendous power of verbally affirming each other.

Verbal compliments, or words of appreciation, are powerful communicators of love. They are best expressed in simple, straightforward statements of affirmation, such as:

“You look sharp in that suit.”

“Do you ever look incredible in that dress! Wow!”

“I really like how you’re always on time to pick me up at work.”

“Thanks for getting the babysitter lined up tonight. I want you to know I don’t take that for granted.”

“You can always make me laugh.”

What would happen to the emotional climate of a marriage if the husband and wife heard such words of affirmation regularly?

Several years ago, I was sitting in my office with my door open. A lady walking down the hall said, “Have you got a minute?”

“Sure, come in.”

She sat down and said, “Dr. Chapman, I’ve got a problem. I can’t get my husband to paint our bedroom. I have been after him for nine months. I have tried everything I know, and I can’t get him to paint it.”

My first thought was, *Lady, you are at the wrong place. I am not a paint contractor.* But I said, “Tell me about it.”

She said, “Well, last Saturday was a good example. You remember how pretty it was? Do you know what my husband did all day long? He was cleaning out his computer files.”

“So what did you do?”

“I went in there and said, ‘Dan, I don’t understand you. Today would have been a perfect day to paint the bedroom, and here you are working on your computer.’”

“So did he paint the bedroom?” I inquired.

“No. It’s still not painted. I don’t know what to do.”

“Let me ask you a question,” I said. “Are you opposed to computers?”

“No, but I want the bedroom painted.”

“Are you certain that your husband knows that you want the bedroom painted?”

“I know he does,” she said. “I have been after him for nine months.”

“Let me ask you one more question. Does your husband ever do anything good?”

“Like what?”

“Oh, like taking the garbage out, or putting gas in the car, or paying the electric bill, or running to the store to get milk and toilet paper?”

“Yes,” she said, “he does some of those things.”

“Then I have two suggestions. One, don’t ever mention painting the bedroom again.” I repeated, “Don’t ever mention it again.”

“I don’t see how that’s going to help,” she said.

“Look, you just told me that he knows that you want the bedroom painted. You don’t have to tell him anymore. He already knows. The second suggestion I have is that the next time your husband does anything good, give him a verbal compliment. If he takes the garbage out, say, ‘Dan, I want you to know that I really appreciate your taking the garbage out.’ Don’t say, ‘About time you took the garbage out. The flies were going to carry it out for you.’ If you see him paying the electric bill, put your hand on his shoulder and say, ‘Dan, I really appreciate your paying the electric bill. I hear there are husbands who don’t do that, and I want you to know how much I appreciate it.’ Or, ‘I really appreciated you running out to the store when I had to finish that project.’ Every time he does anything good, give him a verbal compliment.”

“I don’t see how that’s going to get the bedroom painted.”

I said, “You asked for my advice. You have it. It’s free.”

She wasn’t very happy with me when she left. Three weeks later, however, she came back to my office and said, “It worked!” She had

learned that verbal compliments are far greater motivators than nagging words.

I am not suggesting verbal flattery in order to get your spouse to do something you want. 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 and do something our spouse desires.

ENCOURAGING WORDS

Giving verbal compliments is only one way to express words of affirmation to your spouse. Another dialect is encouraging words. The word *encourage* means “to inspire courage.” All of us have areas in which we feel insecure. We lack courage, and that lack of courage often hinders us from accomplishing the positive things that we would like to do. The latent potential within your spouse in his or her areas of insecurity may await your encouraging words.

Allison had always liked to write. Late in her college career, she took a few courses in journalism. She quickly realized that her excitement about writing exceeded her interest in history, which had been her academic major. It was too late to change majors, but after college and especially before the first baby, she wrote several articles. She submitted one article to a magazine, but when she received a rejection slip, she never had the courage to submit another. Now that the children were older and she had more time to contemplate, Allison was again writing.

Keith, Allison’s husband, had paid little attention to Allison’s writing in the early days of their marriage. He was busy with his own profession and trying to make a place for himself in that world. In time, however, Keith had realized that life’s deepest

meaning is not found in accomplishments but in relationships. He had learned to give more attention to Allison and her interests. So it was quite natural one night for him to pick up one of Allison's articles and read it. When he finished, he went into the den where Allison was reading a book. With great enthusiasm, he said, "I hate to interrupt your reading, but I have to tell you this. I just finished reading your article on 'Making the Most of the Holidays.' Allison, you're a really good writer. This stuff ought to be published! You write clearly. Your words paint pictures that I can visualize. You have great ideas. You have to submit this to some magazines."

"Do you really think so?" Allison asked hesitantly.

"I know so," Keith said. "I'm telling you, this is good."

When Keith left the room, Allison did not resume her reading. With the closed book in her lap, she dreamed for thirty minutes about what Keith had said. She wondered if others would view her writing the same way he did. She remembered the rejection slip she had received years ago, but she reasoned that she was a different person now. Her writing was better. She had had more experiences. Before she left the chair to get a drink of water, Allison had made a decision. She would submit her articles to some magazines. She would see if they could be published.

Keith's encouraging words were spoken many years ago. Allison has had numerous articles published since then and now has a book contract. She is an excellent writer, but it took the encouraging words from her husband to inspire her to take the first step in the arduous process of getting an article published.

Perhaps your spouse has untapped potential in one or more areas of life. That potential may be awaiting your encouraging words. Perhaps she needs to enroll in a course to develop that potential. Maybe he needs to meet some people who have succeeded in that area, who can give him insight on the next step he needs

to take. Your words may give your spouse the courage necessary to take that first step.

Please note that I am not talking about pressuring your spouse to do something that *you* want. I am talking about encouraging him to develop an interest that he already has. For example, a wife might pressure her husband to look for a more lucrative job. The wife thinks she's encouraging her spouse, but to him it sounds more like condemnation. But if he has the desire and motivation to seek a better position, her words will bolster his resolve. Until he has that desire, her words will come across as judgmental and guilt inducing. They express not love but rejection.

If, however, he says, "You know, I've been thinking about starting a handyman business on the side," then she has an opportunity to give words of encouragement. Encouraging words would sound like this. "If you decide to do that, I can tell you one thing. You will be a success. That's one of the things I like about you. When you set your mind to something, you do it. If that's what you want to do, I will certainly do everything I can to help you." Such words may give him the courage to start drawing up a list of potential clients.

Encouragement requires empathy and seeing the world from your spouse's perspective. We must first learn what is important to our spouse. Only then can we give encouragement. With verbal encouragement, we are trying to communicate, "I know. I care. I am with you. How can I help?" We are trying to show that we believe in him and in his abilities. We are giving credit and praise.

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. Of course, encouraging words may be difficult for you to speak. It may not be your primary love language. If you have a pattern of critical and condemning words it may take great

effort for you to learn this second language, but I can assure you that it will be worth the effort.

KIND WORDS

Love is kind. If then we are to communicate love verbally, we must use kind words. That has to do with the way we speak. The same sentence can have two different meanings, depending on how you say it. The statement “I love you,” when said with kindness and tenderness, can be a genuine expression of love. But what about “I love you?” The question mark changes the whole meaning of those three words. Sometimes our words say one thing, but our tone of voice says another. We are sending double messages. Our spouse will usually interpret our message based on our tone of voice, not the words we use.

“I would be delighted to wash dishes tonight,” said in a snarling tone will not be received as an expression of love. On the other hand, we can share pain, sadness, and even anger in a kind manner, and that will be an expression of love. “I felt disappointed and hurt that you didn’t offer to help me this evening,” said with gentle directness, can be an expression of love. The person speaking wants to be known by her spouse. She is taking steps to build intimacy by sharing her feelings. She is asking for an opportunity to discuss a hurt in order to find healing. The same words expressed with a loud, harsh voice will be not an expression of love but an expression of condemnation and judgment.

The manner in which we speak is exceedingly important. An ancient sage once said, “A soft answer turns away anger.” 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.

Love doesn't keep a score of wrongs. Love doesn't bring up past failures. None of us is perfect. In marriage we do not always do the best or right thing. We have sometimes done and said hurtful things to our spouses. We cannot erase the past. We can only confess it and agree that it was wrong. We can ask for forgiveness and try to act differently in the future. Having confessed my failure and asked forgiveness, I can do nothing more to mitigate the hurt it may have caused my spouse. When I have been wronged by my spouse and she has painfully confessed it and requested forgiveness, I have the option of justice or forgiveness. If I choose justice and seek to pay her back or make her pay for her wrongdoing, I am making myself the judge and she the felon. Intimacy becomes impossible. If, however, I choose to forgive, intimacy can be restored. Forgiveness is the way of love.

I am amazed by how many individuals mess up every new day with yesterday. They insist on bringing into today the failures of yesterday, and in so doing, they pollute a potentially wonderful present. "I can't believe you did it. I don't think I'll ever forget it. You can't possibly know how much you hurt me. I don't know how you can sit there so smugly after you treated me that way. You ought to be crawling on your knees, begging me for forgiveness. I

don't know if I can ever forgive you." Those are not the words of love but of bitterness and resentment and revenge.

The best thing we can do with the failures of the past is to let them be history. Yes, it happened. Certainly it hurt. And it may still hurt, but he has acknowledged his failure and asked your forgiveness. 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. It is a choice to show mercy, not to hold the offense up against the offender. Forgiveness is an expression of love. "I love you. I care about you, and I choose to forgive you. Even though my feelings of hurt may linger, I will not allow what has happened to come between us. I hope that we can learn from this experience. You are not a failure because you have failed. You are my spouse, and together we will go on from here." Those are the words of affirmation expressed in the dialect of kind words.

HUMBLE WORDS

Love makes requests, not demands. When I demand things from my spouse, I become a parent and she the child. It is the parent who tells the three-year-old what he ought to do and, in fact, what he must do. That is necessary because the three-year-old does not yet know how to navigate in the treacherous waters of life. In marriage, however, we are equal, adult partners. We are not perfect to be sure, but we are adults and we are partners. If we are to develop an intimate relationship, we need to know each other's desires. If we wish to love each other, we need to know what the other person wants.

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

our needs and desires known in the form of a request, we are giving guidance, not ultimatums. The husband who says, “Could you make that good pasta one of these nights?” is giving his wife guidance on how to love him and thus build intimacy. On the other hand, the husband who says, “Can’t we ever have a decent meal around here?” is being whiny, is making a demand, and his wife is likely to fire back, “Okay, you cook!” The wife who says, “Do you think it will be possible for you to clean the gutters this weekend?” is expressing love by making a request. But the wife who says, “If you don’t get those gutters cleaned out soon, they are going to fall off the house. They already have trees growing out of them!” has ceased to love and has become a domineering spouse.

When you make a request of your spouse, you are affirming his or her worth and abilities. You are in essence indicating that she has something or can do something that is meaningful and worthwhile to you. When, however, you make demands, you have become not a lover but a tyrant. Your spouse will feel not affirmed but belittled. A request introduces the element of choice. 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.

We cannot get emotional love by way of demand. My spouse may in fact comply with my demands, but it is not an expression of love. It is an act of fear or guilt or some other emotion, but not love. Thus, a request creates the possibility for an expression of love, whereas a demand suffocates that possibility.

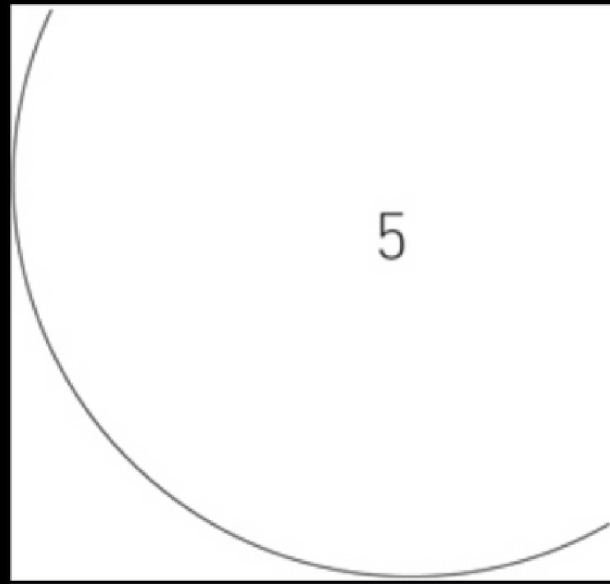
NOTEBOOKS—AND MORE

Words of affirmation are one of the five basic love languages.

Within that language, however, there are many dialects. We have discussed a few already, and there are many more. Entire volumes and numerous articles have been written on these dialects. All of the dialects have in common the use of words to affirm one's spouse. Psychologist William James said that possibly the deepest human need is the need to feel appreciated. Words of affirmation will meet that need in many individuals. If you are not a man or woman of words, if it is not your primary love language but you think it may be the love language of your spouse, let me suggest that you keep a notebook titled "Words of Affirmation." When you read an article or book on love, record the words of affirmation you find. When you hear a lecture on love or you overhear a friend saying something positive about another person, write it down. In time, you will collect quite a list of words to use in communicating love to your spouse.

You may also want to try giving indirect words of affirmation—that is, saying positive things about your spouse when he or she is not present. Eventually, someone will tell your spouse, and you will get full credit for love. Tell your wife's mother how great your wife is. When her mother tells her what you said, it will be amplified, and you will get even more credit. Also affirm your spouse in front of others when he or she is present. When you are given public honor for an accomplishment, be sure to share the credit with your spouse. You may also try your hand at writing words of affirmation. Written words have the benefit of being read over and over again.

I learned an important lesson about words of affirmation and love languages years ago in Little Rock, Arkansas, when I visited Mark and Andrea in their home on a beautiful spring day. The setting was idyllic—on the outside. Once inside, however, I discovered the truth. Their marriage was in shambles. Twelve years



LOVE LANGUAGE #2

Quality Time

I should have picked up on Andrea's primary love language from the beginning. What was she saying on that spring night when I visited her and Mark in Little Rock? "Mark doesn't spend any time with me. What good are all our things if we don't ever enjoy them together?" What was her desire? Quality time with Mark. She wanted his attention. She wanted him to focus on her, to give her time, to do things with her.

By "quality time," I mean giving someone your undivided attention. I don't mean sitting on the couch watching television together. When you spend time that way, Netflix or HBO has your attention—not your spouse. What I mean is sitting on the couch with the TV off, looking at each other and talking, devices put away, giving each other your undivided attention. It means taking

a walk, just the two of you, or going out to eat and looking at each other and talking.

Time is a precious commodity. We all have multiple demands on our time, yet each of us has the exact same hours in a day. We can make the most of those hours by committing some of them to our spouse. If your mate's primary love language is quality time, she simply wants you, being with her, spending time.

Provided it's the right kind of time.

Have you ever noticed that in a restaurant, you can almost always tell the difference between a dating couple and a married couple? Dating couples look at each other and talk. Married couples sit there and gaze around the restaurant. You'd think they went there to eat!

When I sit with my wife and give her twenty minutes of my undivided attention and she does the same for me, we are giving each other twenty minutes of life. We will never have those twenty minutes again; we are giving our lives to each other. It is a powerful emotional communicator of love.

One medicine cannot cure all diseases. In my advice to Andrea and Mark, I made a serious mistake. I assumed that words of affirmation would mean as much to her as they would to him. I had hoped that if each of them would give adequate verbal affirmation, the emotional climate would change, and both of them would begin to feel loved. It worked for Mark. He began to feel more positive about Andrea, sensing her genuine appreciation for his hard work, but it had not worked as well for Andrea, because words of affirmation was not her primary love language. Her language was quality time.

I called Mark, who told me Andrea was still not very happy. "I think I know why," I said. "The problem is that I suggested the wrong love language."

Mark hadn't the foggiest idea what I meant. I explained that what makes one person feel loved emotionally is not always the thing that makes another person feel loved emotionally.

He agreed that his language was words of affirmation. He told me how much that had meant to him as a boy and how good he felt when his wife expressed appreciation for the things he did. I explained that Andrea's language was not words of affirmation but quality time. I explained the concept of giving someone your undivided attention, not talking to her while you watch sports or read texts but looking into her eyes, giving her your full attention, doing something with her that *she* enjoys doing and doing it wholeheartedly. "Like going to the symphony with her," he said. I could tell the lights were coming on in Little Rock.

"Dr. Chapman, that's what she has always complained about. I didn't do things with her; I didn't spend any time with her. She'd always say, 'We used to go places and do things before we were married, but now, you're too busy.' That's her love language all right; no question about it. But what am I gonna do? My job is so demanding."

"Tell me about it," I said.

For the next ten minutes, he gave me the history of his climb up the organizational ladder, of how hard he had worked, and how proud he was of his accomplishments. He told me of his dreams for the future and that he knew that within the next five years, he would be where he wanted to be.

"Do you want to be there alone, or do you want to be there with Andrea and the children?" I asked.

"I want her to be with me, Dr. Chapman. I want her to enjoy it with me. That's why it always hurts so much when she criticizes me for spending time on the job. I am doing it for us. I wanted her to be a part of it, but she's always so negative."

“Are you beginning to see why she was so negative, Mark?” I asked. “Her love language is quality time. You have given her so little time that her love tank is empty. She doesn’t feel secure in your love. Therefore she has lashed out at what was taking your time in her mind—your job. She doesn’t really hate your job. She hates the fact that she feels so little love coming from you. There’s only one answer, Mark, and it’s costly. You have to make time for Andrea. You have to love her in the right love language.”

“I know you are right, Dr. Chapman. Where do I begin?”

I asked Mark if he had his legal pad handy—the same pad on which he had listed positive things about Andrea.

“It’s right here.”

“Good. We’re going to make another list. What are some things that you know Andrea would like you to do with her? Things she has mentioned through the years.” Here is Mark’s list:

- Spend a weekend in the mountains (sometimes with the kids and sometimes just the two of us).
- Meet her for lunch (at a nice restaurant or sometimes just at Panera).
- When I come home at night, sit down and talk with her about my day and listen as she tells me about her day. (She doesn’t want me to watch TV while we are trying to talk.)
- Spend time talking with the children about their school experiences.
- Spend time playing games with the children.
- Go on a picnic with her and the kids on Saturday and don’t complain about the ants and the flies.
- Take a vacation with the family at least once a year.
- Go walking with her and talk as we walk.

When Mark's list was finished, I said, "You know what I am going to suggest, don't you, Mark?"

"Do them," he said.

"That's right, one a week for the next two months. Where will you find the time? You will make it. You are a wise man," I continued. "You would not be where you are if you were not a good decision maker. You have the ability to plan your life and to include Andrea in your plans."

"I know," he said. "I can do it."

"And, Mark, this does not have to diminish your vocational goals. It just means that when you get to the top, Andrea and the children will be with you."

"That's what I want more than anything," Mark said with feeling.

The years have come and gone. Andrea and Mark have had ups and downs, but the important thing is that they have done it all together. The children have left the nest, and Mark and Andrea agree that these are their best years ever. Mark has become an avid symphony fan, and Andrea has made an unending list in her legal pad of things she appreciates about Mark. He never tires of hearing them.

FOCUSED ATTENTION

It isn't enough to just be in the same room with someone. A key ingredient in giving your spouse quality time is giving them focused attention, especially in this era of many distractions. When a father is sitting on the floor, rolling a ball to his two-year-old, his attention is not focused on the ball but on his child. For that brief moment, however long it lasts, they are together. If, however, the father is talking on the phone while he rolls the ball, his attention is diluted. Some husbands and wives think they are spending time

together when, in reality, they are only living in close proximity. They are in the same house at the same time, but they are not together. A wife who is texting while her husband tries to talk to her is not giving him quality time, because he does not have her full attention.

Quality time does not mean that we have to spend our together moments gazing into each other's eyes. It means that we are doing something together and that we are giving our full attention to the other person. The activity in which we are both engaged is incidental. The important thing emotionally is that we are spending focused time with each other. The activity is a vehicle that creates the sense of togetherness. The important thing about the father rolling the ball to the two-year-old is not the activity itself but the emotions that are created between the father and his child.

Similarly, a husband and wife going running together, if it is genuine quality time, will focus not on the run but on the fact that they are spending time together. What happens on the emotional level is what matters. Our spending time together in a common pursuit communicates that we care about each other, that we enjoy being with each other, that we like to do things together.

QUALITY CONVERSATION

Like words of affirmation, the language of quality time also has many dialects. One of the most common dialects is that of *quality conversation*. By quality conversation, I mean sympathetic dialogue where two individuals are sharing their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires in a friendly, uninterrupted context. Most individuals who complain that their spouse does not talk do not mean literally that he or she never says a word. They mean that he or she seldom takes part in sympathetic dialogue. If

your spouse's primary love language is quality time, such dialogue is crucial to his or her emotional sense of being loved.

Quality conversation is quite different from the first love language. Words of affirmation focus on what we are saying, whereas quality conversation focuses on what we are hearing. If I am sharing my love for you by means of quality time and we are going to spend that time in conversation, it means I will focus on drawing you out, listening sympathetically to what you have to say. I will ask questions, not in a badgering manner but with a genuine desire to understand your thoughts, feelings, and desires.

I met Patrick when he was forty-three and had been married for seventeen years. I remember him because his first words were so dramatic. He sat in the leather chair in my office and after briefly introducing himself, he leaned forward and said with great emotion, "Dr. Chapman, I have been a fool, a real fool."

"What has led you to that conclusion?" I asked.

"I've been married for seventeen years," he said, "and my wife has left me. Now I realize what a fool I've been."

I repeated my original question, "In what way have you been a fool?"

"My wife would come home from work and tell me about the problems in her office. I would listen to her and then tell her what I thought she should do. I always gave her advice. I told her she had to confront the problem. 'Problems don't go away. You have to talk with the people involved or your supervisor. You have to deal with problems.' The next day she would come home from work and tell me about the same problems. I would ask her if she did what I had suggested the day before. She would shake her head and say no.

"After three or four nights of that, I would get angry. I would tell her not to expect any sympathy from me if she wasn't willing to take the advice I was giving her. She didn't have to live under

that kind of stress and pressure. She could solve the problem if she would simply do what I told her. It hurt me to see her living under such stress because I knew she didn't have to. The next time she'd bring up the problem, I would say, 'I don't want to hear about it. I've told you what you need to do. If you're not going to listen to my advice, I don't want to hear it.'

"I would withdraw and go about my business. What a fool I was," he said, "what a fool! Now I realize that she didn't want advice when she told me about her struggles at work. She wanted sympathy. She wanted me to listen, to give her attention, to let her know that I could understand the hurt, the stress, the pressure. She wanted to know that I loved her and that I was with her. She didn't want advice; she just wanted to know that I understood. But I never tried to understand. I was too busy giving advice. And now she's gone."

Patrick's wife had been pleading for quality conversation. Emotionally, she longed for him to focus attention on her by listening to her pain and frustration. Patrick was not focusing on listening but on speaking. He listened only long enough to hear the problem and formulate a solution. He didn't listen long enough or well enough to hear her cry for support and understanding.

Many of us are like Patrick. We 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. Most of us have little training in listening. We are far more efficient in thinking and speaking. Learning to listen may be as difficult as learning a foreign language, but learn we must, if we want to communicate love. That is especially true if

your spouse's primary love language is quality time and his or her dialect is quality conversation. Fortunately, numerous books and articles have been written on developing the art of listening. I will not seek to repeat what is written elsewhere but suggest the following summary of practical tips.

1. Maintain eye contact when your spouse is talking. That keeps your mind from wandering and communicates that he/she has your full attention.
2. Don't listen to your spouse and do something else at the same time. Remember, quality time is giving someone your undivided attention. If you are doing something you cannot turn from immediately, tell your spouse the truth. A positive approach might be, "I know you are trying to talk to me and I'm interested, but I want to give you my full attention. I can't do that right now, but if you will give me ten minutes to finish this, I'll sit down and listen to you." Most spouses will respect such a request.
3. Listen for feelings. Ask yourself, "What emotion is my spouse experiencing?" When you think you have the answer, confirm it. For example, "It sounds to me like you are feeling disappointed because I forgot _____." That gives him the chance to clarify his feelings. It also communicates that you are listening intently to what he is saying.
4. Observe body language. Clenched fists, trembling hands, tears, furrowed brows, and eye movements may give you clues as to what the other is feeling. Sometimes body language speaks one message while words speak another. Ask for clarification to make sure you know what she is really thinking and feeling.
5. Refuse to interrupt. Research has indicated that the average individual listens for only seventeen seconds before interrupt-

ing and interjecting his own ideas. If I give you my undivided attention while you are talking, I will refrain from defending myself or hurling accusations at you or dogmatically stating my position. My goal is to discover your thoughts and feelings. My objective is not to defend myself or to set you straight. It is to understand you.

LEARNING TO TALK

Quality conversation requires not only sympathetic listening but also self-revelation. When a wife says, “I wish my husband would talk. I never know what he’s thinking or feeling,” she is pleading for intimacy. She wants to feel close to her husband, but how can she feel close to someone whom she doesn’t know? In order for her to feel loved, he must learn to reveal himself. If her primary love language is quality time and her dialect is quality conversation, her emotional love tank will never be filled until he tells her his thoughts and feelings.

Self-revelation does not come easy for some of us. We may have grown up in homes where the expression of thoughts and feelings was not encouraged but squelched. To request a toy was to receive a lecture on the sad state of family finances. The child went away feeling guilty for having the desire, and he quickly learned not to express his desires. When he expressed anger, the parents responded with harsh and condemning words. Thus, the child learned that expressing angry feelings is not appropriate. If the child was made to feel guilty for expressing disappointment at not being able to go to the store with his father, he learned to hold his disappointment inside. By the time we reach adulthood, many of us have learned to deny our feelings. We are no longer in touch with our emotional selves.

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A wife says to her husband, “How did you feel about what Steve did?” And the husband responds, “I think he was wrong. He should have—” but he is not telling her his feelings. He is voicing his thoughts. Perhaps he has reason to feel angry or disappointed, but he has lived so long in the world of thought that he does not acknowledge his feelings. When he decides to learn the language of quality conversation, it will be like learning a foreign language. The place to begin is by getting in touch with his feelings, becoming aware that he is an emotional creature in spite of the fact that he has denied that part of his life.

If you need to learn the language of quality conversation, begin by noting the emotions you feel away from home. Carry a small notepad and keep it with you daily. Three times each day, ask yourself, “What emotions have I felt in the last three hours? What did I feel on the way to work when the driver behind me was riding my bumper? What did I feel when I stopped at the gas station and the automatic pump did not shut off and the side of the car was covered in gas? What did I feel when I got to the office and found that the project I was working on had to be completed in three days when I thought I had another two weeks?”

Write down your feelings in the notepad and a word or two to help you remember the event corresponding to the feeling. Your list may look like this:

Event	Feelings
• tailgater	• angry
• gas station	• very upset
• work project due	• frustrated and anxious



Do that exercise three times a day and you will develop an awareness of your emotional nature. Using your notepad, communicate your emotions and the events briefly with your spouse as many days as possible. In a few weeks, you will become comfortable expressing your emotions with him or her. And eventually you will feel comfortable discussing your emotions toward your spouse, the children, and events that occur within the home. Remember, emotions themselves are neither good nor bad. They are simply our psychological responses to the events of life.

Based on our thoughts and emotions, we eventually make decisions. When the tailgater was following you on the highway and you felt angry, perhaps you had these thoughts: I wish he would lay off; I wish he would pass me; if I thought I wouldn't get caught, I'd press the accelerator and leave him in the twilight; I should slam on my brakes and let his insurance company buy me a new car; maybe I'll pull off the road and let him pass.

Eventually, you made some decision or the other driver backed off, turned, or passed you, and you arrived safely at work. In each of life's events, we have emotions, thoughts, desires, and eventually actions. The expression of that process is called self-revelation. If you choose to learn the love dialect of quality conversation, that is the learning road you must follow.

DEAD SEAS AND BABBLING BROOKS

Not all of us are out of touch with our emotions, but when it comes to talking, all of us are affected by our personality. I have observed two basic personality types. The first I call the "Dead Sea." In the little nation of Israel, the Sea of Galilee flows south by way of the Jordan River into the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea goes nowhere. It receives but it does not give. This personality type receives many experiences, emotions, and thoughts throughout the

day. They have a large reservoir where they store that information, and they are perfectly happy not to talk. If you say to a Dead Sea personality, "What's wrong? Why aren't you talking tonight?" he will probably answer, "Nothing's wrong. What makes you think something's wrong?" And that response is perfectly honest. He is content not to talk. He could drive from Chicago to Detroit and never say a word and be perfectly happy.

On the other extreme is the "Babbling Brook." For this personality, whatever enters into the eye gate or the ear gate comes out the mouth gate and there are seldom sixty seconds between the two. Whatever they see, whatever they hear, they tell. In fact, if no one is at home to talk to, they will call someone else. "Do you know what I saw? Do you know what I heard?" If they can't get someone on the phone, they may talk to themselves because they have no reservoir. Many times a Dead Sea marries a Babbling Brook. That happens because when they are dating, it is a very attractive match.

If you are a Dead Sea and you date a Babbling Brook, you will have a wonderful evening. You don't have to think, "How will I get the conversation started tonight? How will I keep the conversation flowing?" In fact, you don't have to think at all. All you have to do is nod your head and say, "Uh-huh," and she will fill up the whole evening and you will go home saying, "What a wonderful person." On the other hand, if you are a Babbling Brook and you date a Dead Sea, you will have an equally wonderful evening because Dead Seas are the world's best listeners. You will babble for three hours. He will listen intently to you, and you will go home saying, "What a wonderful person." You attract each other. But five years after marriage, the Babbling Brook wakes up one morning and says, "We've been married five years, and I don't know him." The Dead Sea is saying, "I know her too well. I wish she

would stop the flow and give me a break.” The good news is that Dead Seas can learn to talk and Babbling Brooks can learn to listen. We are influenced by our personality but not controlled by it.

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. I call that the “Minimum Daily Requirement” for a healthy marriage. If you will start with the daily minimum, in a few weeks or months you may find quality conversation flowing more freely between you.

QUALITY ACTIVITIES

In addition to the basic love language of quality time, or giving your spouse your undivided attention, is another dialect called quality activities. At a recent marriage seminar, I asked couples to complete the following sentence: “I feel most loved by my husband/wife when _____.” Here is the response of a twenty-nine-year-old husband who has been married for eight years: “I feel most loved by my wife when we do things together, things I like to do and things she likes to do. We talk more. It sorta feels like we are dating again.” That is a typical response of individuals whose primary love language is quality time. The emphasis is on being together, doing things together, giving each other undivided attention.

Quality activities may include anything in which one or both of you have 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 like, “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.

One of Emily's favorite pastimes is browsing in used bookstores. "I love to just disappear into the stacks and see what treasures I can find," she says. Husband Jeff, less of an avid reader, has learned to share these experiences with Emily and even point out books she may enjoy. Emily, for her part, has learned to compromise and not force Jeff to spend hours in the stacks. As a result, Jeff proudly says, "I vowed early on that if there was a book Emily wanted, I would buy it for her." Jeff may never become a bookworm, but he has become proficient at loving Emily.

Quality activities may include putting in a garden, visiting historic sites, birding, going to a concert, working out together, or having another couple over for homemade soup and bread. The activities are limited only by your interest and willingness to try new experiences. The essential ingredients in a quality activity are: (1) at least one of you wants to do it, (2) the other is willing to do it, (3) both of you know why you are doing it—to express love by being together.

One of the by-products of quality activities is that they provide a memory bank from which to draw in the years ahead. Fortunate is the couple who remembers a foggy early-morning stroll along the coast, the spring they put in a prairie garden, the day they revisited their childhood neighborhood, the night they attended their first major-league baseball game together, the one and only time they went skiing together and he broke his leg, the quiet times of working side by side at night in their home office, and oh yes, the awe of standing beneath the waterfall after the two-mile hike. They can almost feel the mist as they remember. Those are memories of love, especially for the person whose primary love language is quality time.

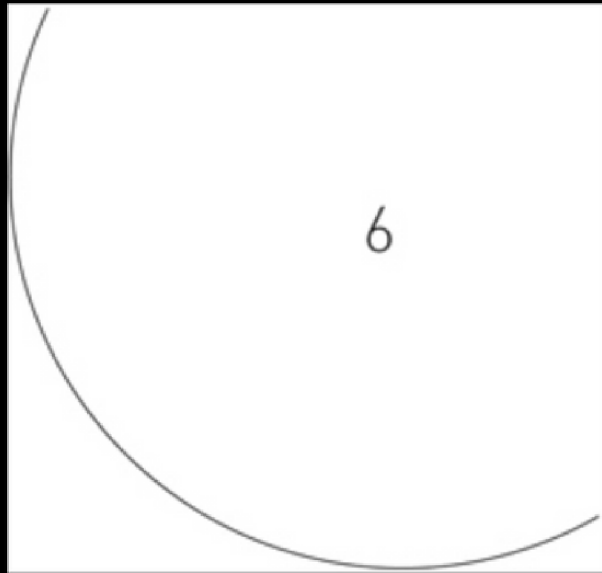
And where do we find time for such activities, especially if both of us have vocations outside the home? We make time, just as we

make time for lunch and dinner. Why? Because it is just as essential to our marriage as meals are to our health. Is it difficult? Does it take careful planning? Yes. Does it mean we have to give up some individual activities? Perhaps. Does it mean we do some things we don't particularly enjoy? Certainly (see Jeff and Emily). Is it worth it? Without a doubt. What's in it for me? The pleasure of living with a spouse who feels loved and knowing that I have learned to speak his or her love language fluently.

A personal word of thanks to Mark and Andrea in Little Rock, who taught me the value of love language number one, words of affirmation, and love language number two, quality time. Now, it's on to Chicago and love language number three.

YOUR TURN

What in your marriage detracts from spending quality time?



LOVE LANGUAGE #3

Receiving Gifts

Erik spent a year in Kelsey’s “friend zone” before she agreed to go out with him. Since they were both big baseball fans, Erik took her to a minor-league game in Indianapolis. They were sitting in a grassy area beyond the left-field fence when suddenly a hard-hit drive came their way. Erik jumped up and made an impressive barehanded catch—his first home-run grab ever.

Two days later Kelsey found a gift-wrapped package outside her dorm room. She opened it and found a baseball in a small plastic display case (the kind collectors use). Taped to the inside of the case was a ticket stub from the game. Inscribed on the ball was the date of the game and these words:

1st home-run catch

2nd best thing to happen to me that day

They were married two years after that first date. Fifteen years later that baseball, still in its display case, sits on Kelsey's dresser where she can see it every day. It is the first thing she would grab if the house were on fire.

A REMINDER OF LOVE

When I studied anthropology, I was able to "visit" people groups all over the world. I went to Central America and studied the advanced cultures of the Mayans and the Aztecs. I crossed the Pacific and studied the tribal peoples of Melanesia and Polynesia. I studied the Eskimos of the northern tundra and the aboriginal Ainus of Japan. I examined the cultural patterns surrounding love and marriage and found that in every culture I studied, gift giving was a part of the love-marriage process.

Anthropologists are intrigued by cultural patterns that tend to pervade cultures, and so was I. Could it be that gift giving is a fundamental expression of love that transcends cultural barriers?

One of my anthropology field trips was to the island of Dominica. Our purpose was to study the culture of the Carib Indians, and on the trip I met Fred. Fred was not a Carib but a young black man of twenty-eight years. Fred had lost a hand in a fishing-by-dynamite accident. Since the accident, he could not continue his fishing career. He had plenty of available time, and I welcomed his companionship. We spent hours together talking about his culture.

Upon my first visit to Fred's house, he said to me, "Mr. Gary, would you like to have some juice?" to which I responded enthusiastically. He turned to his younger brother and said, "Go get Mr. Gary some juice." His brother turned, walked down the dirt path,

climbed a coconut tree, and returned with a green coconut. “Open it,” Fred commanded. With three swift movements of the machete, his brother uncorked the coconut, leaving a triangular hole at the top. Fred handed me the coconut and said, “Juice for you.” It was green, but I drank it—all of it—because I knew it was a gift of love. I was his friend, and to friends you give juice.

At the end of our weeks together as I prepared to leave that small island, Fred gave me a final token of his love. It was a crooked stick fourteen inches in length that he had taken from the ocean. It was silky smooth from pounding upon the rocks. Fred said that the stick had lived on the shores of Dominica for a long time, and he wanted me to have it as a reminder of the beautiful island. Even today when I look at that stick, I can almost hear the sound of the Caribbean waves, but it is not as much a reminder of Dominica as it is a reminder of love.

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. 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.

Mothers remember the days their children bring a flower from the yard as a gift. They feel loved, even if it was a dandelion or a flower they didn’t want picked. From early years, children are inclined to give gifts to their parents, which may be another indication that gift giving is fundamental to love.

Gifts are visual symbols of love. Most wedding ceremonies include the giving and receiving of rings. The person performing the ceremony says, “These rings are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual bond that unites your two hearts in love that

has no end.” That is not meaningless rhetoric. It is verbalizing a significant truth—symbols have emotional value. Perhaps that is even more graphically displayed near the end of a disintegrating marriage when the husband or wife stops wearing the wedding ring. One husband said, “When she threw her wedding rings at me and angrily walked out of the house, slamming the door behind her, I knew our marriage was in serious trouble. I didn’t pick up her rings for two days. When I finally did, I couldn’t stop crying.” The lonely rings stirred deep emotions within the husband.

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. 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 pride. I will also be 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. To the individual whose primary love language is receiving gifts, the cost of the gift will matter little, unless it is out of line with what you can afford. If a millionaire gives only one-dollar gifts regularly, the spouse may question whether that is an expression of love, but when family finances are limited, a one-dollar gift may speak a million dollars worth of love.

Gifts may be purchased, found, or made. The husband who finds an interesting bird feather while out jogging and brings it home to his wife has found himself an expression of love, unless, of course, his wife is allergic to feathers. For the man who can afford it, you can purchase a beautiful card for less than five dollars. For the man who cannot, you can make one for free. Get the paper out of the

trash can where you work, fold it in the middle, take scissors and cut out a heart, write "I love you," and sign your name. Gifts need not be expensive.

But what of the person who says, "I'm not a gift giver. I didn't receive many gifts growing up. I never learned how to select gifts. It doesn't come naturally for me." Congratulations, you have just made the first discovery in becoming a great lover. You and your spouse speak different love languages. Now that you have made that discovery, get on with the business of learning your second language. If your spouse's primary love language is receiving gifts, you can become a proficient gift giver. In fact, it is one of the easiest love languages to learn.

Where do you begin? Make a list of all the gifts your spouse has expressed excitement about receiving through the years. They may be gifts you have given or gifts given by other family members or friends. The list will give you an idea of the kind of gifts your spouse would enjoy receiving. If you have little or no knowledge about selecting the kinds of gifts on your list, recruit the help of family members who know your spouse. In the meantime, select gifts that you feel comfortable purchasing, making, or finding, and give them to your spouse. Don't wait for a special occasion. If receiving gifts is his/her primary love language, almost anything you give will be received as an expression of love. (If she has been critical of your gifts in the past and almost nothing you have given has been acceptable, then receiving gifts is almost certainly not her primary love language.)

THE BEST INVESTMENT

If you are to become an effective gift giver, you may have to change your attitude about money. Each of us has an individualized perception of the purposes of money, and we have various

emotions associated with spending it. Some of us have a spending orientation. We feel good about ourselves when we are spending money. Others have a saving and investing perspective. We feel good about ourselves when we are saving money and investing it wisely.

If you are a spender, you will have little difficulty purchasing gifts for your spouse; but if you are a saver, you will experience emotional resistance to the idea of spending money as an expression of love. You don't purchase things for yourself. Why should you purchase things for your spouse? But that attitude fails to recognize that you are purchasing things for yourself. By saving and investing money, you are purchasing self-worth and emotional security. You are caring for your own emotional needs in the way you handle money. What you are not doing is meeting the emotional needs of your spouse. 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 spouse'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 persons' emotional needs are met, your marriage will take on a whole new dimension. Don't worry about your savings. You will always be a saver, but to invest in loving your spouse is to invest in blue-chip stocks.

THE GIFT OF SELF

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. Sonia once said to me, “My husband loves softball more than he loves me.”

“Why do you say that?” I inquired.

“On the day our baby was born, he played softball. I was lying in the hospital all afternoon while he played softball,” she said.

“Was he there when the baby was born?”

“He stayed long enough for the baby to be born, but ten minutes afterward, he left. It was awful. It was such an important moment in our lives. I wanted us to share it together. I wanted Tony to be there with me.”

That “baby” was now fifteen years old, and Sonia was talking about the event with all the emotion as though it had happened yesterday. I probed further. “Have you based your conclusion that Tony loves softball more than he loves you on this one experience?”

“No,” she said. “On the day of my mother’s funeral, he also played softball.”

“Did he go to the funeral?”

“Yes, he did. He went to the funeral, but as soon as it was over, he left to get to his game. I couldn’t believe it. My brothers and sisters came to the house with me, but my husband was playing softball.”

Later, I asked Tony about those two events. He knew exactly what I was talking about. “I knew she would bring that up,” he said. “I was there through all the labor and when the baby was born. I took pictures; I was so happy. I couldn’t wait to tell the guys on the team, but my bubble was burst when I got back to the hospital that evening. She was furious with me. I couldn’t believe what she was saying. I thought she would be proud of me for telling the team.

“And when her mother died? She probably didn’t tell you that I took off work a week before she died and spent the whole week at

the hospital and at her mother's house doing repairs and helping out. After she died and the funeral was over, I felt I had done all I could do. I needed a breather. I like to play softball, and I knew that would help me relax and relieve some of the stress I'd been under. I thought she would want me to take a break.

"I had done what I thought was important to her, but it wasn't enough. She has never let me forget those two days. She says that I love softball more than I love her. That's ridiculous."

He was a sincere husband who failed to understand the tremendous power of presence. His being there for his wife was more important than anything else in her mind. 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. Your body becomes the symbol of your love. Remove the symbol, and the sense of love evaporates. In counseling, Tony and Sonia worked through the hurts and misunderstandings of the past. Eventually, Sonia was able to forgive him, and Tony came to understand why his presence was so important to her.

If the physical presence of your spouse is important to you, I urge you to verbalize that to your spouse. Don't expect him to read your mind. If, on the other hand, your spouse says to you, "I really want you to be there with me tonight, tomorrow, this afternoon," take his request seriously. From your perspective, it may not be important; but if you are not responsive to that request, you may be communicating a message you do not intend. A husband once said, "When my mother died, my wife's supervisor said that she could be off two hours for the funeral, but she needed to be back in the office for the afternoon. My wife told him that she felt her husband needed her support that day and she would have to be away the entire day. The supervisor replied, 'If you are gone all day, you may well lose your job.'"

“My wife said, ‘My husband is more important than my job.’ She spent the day with me. Somehow that day, I felt more loved by her than ever before. I have never forgotten what she did.

“Incidentally, she didn’t lose her job. Her supervisor soon left, and she was asked to take his job.” That wife had spoken the love language of her husband, and he never forgot it.

MIRACLE IN CHICAGO

Almost everything ever written on the subject of love indicates that at the heart of love is the spirit of giving. All five love languages challenge us to give to our spouse, but for some, receiving gifts, visible symbols of love, speaks the loudest. I heard the most graphic illustration of that truth in Chicago, where I met Doug and Kate.

They attended my marriage seminar and agreed to take me to O’Hare Airport after the seminar on Saturday afternoon. We had two or three hours before my flight, and they asked if I would like to stop at a restaurant. I was famished, so I readily assented.

Kate began talking almost immediately after we sat down. She said, “Dr. Chapman, God used you to perform a miracle in our marriage. Three years ago, we attended your marriage seminar here in Chicago for the first time. I was desperate,” she said. “I was thinking seriously of leaving Doug and had told him so. Our marriage had been empty for a long time. I had given up. For years, I had complained to Doug that I needed his love, but he never responded. I loved the children, and I knew they loved me, but I felt nothing coming from Doug. In fact, by that time, I hated him. He was a methodical person. He did everything by routine. He was as predictable as a clock, and no one could break into his routine.

“For years,” she continued, “I tried to be a good wife. I did all the things I thought a good wife should do. I had sex with him because

I knew that was important to him, but I felt no love coming from him. I felt like he stopped dating me after we got married and simply took me for granted. I felt used and unappreciated.

“When I talked to Doug about my feelings, he’d laugh at me and say we had as good a marriage as anybody else in the community. He didn’t understand why I was so unhappy. He would remind me that the bills were paid, that we had a nice house and a new car, that I was free to work or not work outside the home, and that I should be happy instead of complaining all the time. He didn’t even try to understand my feelings. I felt totally rejected.

“Well, anyway,” she said as she moved her tea and leaned forward, “we came to your seminar three years ago. I did not know what to expect, and frankly I didn’t expect much. I didn’t think anybody could change Doug. During and after the seminar, he didn’t say too much. He seemed to like it. Then that Monday afternoon, he came home from work and gave me a rose. ‘Where did you get that?’ I asked. ‘I bought it from a street vendor,’ he said. ‘I thought you deserved a rose.’ I started crying. ‘Oh, Doug, that is so sweet of you.’

“On Tuesday he texted me from the office at about one thirty and asked me what I thought about his picking up a pizza for dinner. That may not sound like a big deal to most people, but Doug never does anything like that. I told him I thought the idea was wonderful, and so he brought home a pizza and we all had a fun time together. I gave him a hug and told him how much I enjoyed it.

“When he came home on Wednesday, he brought each of the kids a box of Cracker Jacks, and he had a small potted plant for me. He said he knew the rose would die, and he thought I might like something that would be around for a while. I was beginning to

think I was hallucinating! I couldn't believe what Doug was doing or why he was doing it.

"Thursday night after dinner, he handed me a card with a message about his not always being able to express his love to me but hoping that the card would communicate how much he cared. 'Why don't we get a babysitter on Saturday night and the two of us go out for dinner?' he suggested. 'That would be great,' I said. On Friday afternoon, he stopped by the cookie shop and bought each of us one of our favorite cookies. Again, he kept it as a surprise, telling us only that he had a treat for dessert.

"By Saturday night," she said, "I was in orbit. I had no idea what had come over Doug, or if it would last, but I was enjoying every minute of it. After our dinner at the restaurant, I said to him, 'Doug, you have to tell me what's happening. I don't understand.'"

She looked at me intently. "Dr. Chapman, this was a man who never gave me a gift, ever. He never gave me a card for any occasion. He always said, 'It's a waste of money; you look at the card and throw it away.' He never bought the children anything and expected me to buy only the essentials. He expected me to have dinner ready every night. I mean, this was a radical change in his behavior."

I turned to Doug and asked, "What did you say to her in the restaurant when she asked you what was going on?"

"I told her that I had listened to your lecture on love languages at the seminar and that I realized that her love language was gifts. I also realized that I had not given her a gift in years, maybe not since we had been married. I remembered that when we were dating, I used to bring her flowers and other small gifts, but after marriage I figured we couldn't afford that. I told her that I had decided that I was going to try to get her a gift every day for one week

and see if it made any difference in her. I had to admit that I had seen a pretty big difference in her attitude during the week.

“I told her that I realized that what you said was really true and that learning the right love language was the key to helping another person feel loved. I said I was sorry that I had been so dense for all those years and had failed to meet her need for love. I told her that I really loved her and that I appreciated all the things she did for me and the kids. I told her that with God’s help, I was going to be a gift giver for the rest of my life.

“She said, ‘But, Doug, you can’t go on buying me gifts every day for the rest of your life. We can’t afford that.’ ‘Well, maybe not every day,’ I said, ‘but at least once a week. That would be fifty-two more gifts per year than what you have received in the past five years.’”

“I don’t think he has missed a single week in three years,” Kate said. “He is like a new man. You wouldn’t believe how happy we have been. Our children call us lovebirds now. My tank is full and overflowing.”

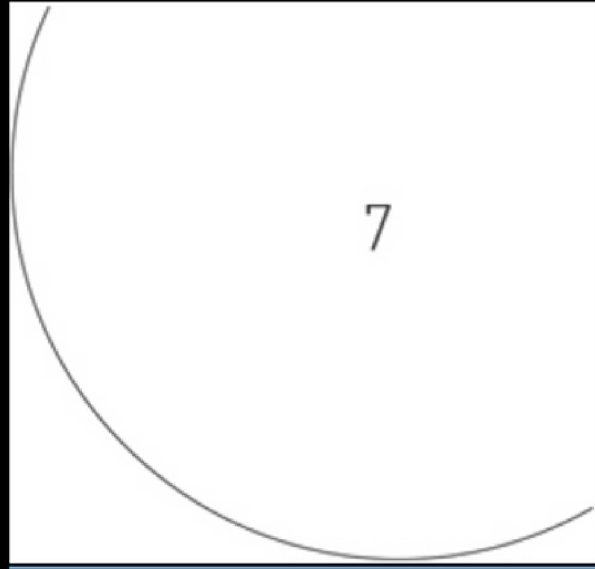
I looked at Doug. “But what about you, Doug? Do you feel loved by Kate?”

“Oh, I’ve always felt loved by her, Dr. Chapman. She does so much to help me and the kids. She takes care of the finances, knows where we all have to be when, stays in touch with my family on Facebook ... I know she loves me.” He smiled and said, “Now, you know what my love language is, don’t you?”

I did, and I also knew why Kate had used the word *miracle*.

Gifts need not be expensive, nor must they be given weekly. But for some individuals, their worth has nothing to do with monetary value and everything to do with love.

YOUR TURN



LOVE LANGUAGE #4

Acts of Service

Michelle sat in the living room, pecking away at the laptop. She could hear sounds from the utility room, where husband Brad was catching up with the piles of laundry. She smiled to herself. In recent days Brad had cleaned the condo, fixed supper, and run the errands, all because Michelle was in the midst of working on her thesis for grad school. It made her feel content ... loved.

Michelle's primary love language was what I call "acts of service." By acts of service, I mean doing things you know your spouse would like you to do. You seek to please her by serving her, to express your love for her by doing things for her. So it was with Doug and Kate, whom we met in the last chapter.

Such actions as cooking a meal, setting a table, emptying the dishwasher, vacuuming, changing the baby's diaper, picking up a

prescription, keeping the car in operating condition, paying the bills, trimming the shrubs, walking the dog, and dealing with landlords and insurance companies are all acts of service. They require thought, planning, time, effort, and energy. If done with a positive spirit, they are indeed expressions of love.

And they don't necessarily require a lot of time. One man always dreaded the chore of bringing in the garbage cans from the curb at the end of a long workweek. All he wanted to do was go directly in the house, kick off his shoes, and relax. But some nights were different: "As I turned down our street and scanned the horizon for the toppled cans, they were nowhere to be seen. My wife had already taken them into the garage. The empty curb was a clear message to me: 'I was thinking of you. You were with me, even when you were gone.'"²

CONVERSATION IN A MILL TOWN

I discovered the impact of acts of service in the little village of China Grove, North Carolina. China Grove sits in central North Carolina, originally nestled in chinaberry trees, not far from Andy Griffith's legendary Mayberry. At the time of this story, China Grove was a textile town with a population of 1,500. I had been away for more than ten years, studying anthropology, psychology, and theology. I was making my semiannual visit to keep in touch with my roots.

Almost everyone I knew except Dr. Shin and Dr. Smith worked in the mill. Dr. Shin was the medical doctor, and Dr. Smith was the dentist. And of course, there was Preacher Blackburn, who was pastor of the church. For most couples in China Grove, life centered on work and church. The conversation at the mill focused on the superintendent's latest decision and how it affected their job in particular. The services at church focused mainly on

the anticipated joys of heaven. In that pristine American setting, I discovered love language number four.

I was standing under a chinaberry tree after church on Sunday when a young couple approached me. I didn't recognize either of them. I assumed they had grown up while I was away. Introducing himself, Dave said, "I hear you've been studying counseling."

I smiled and said, "Well, a little bit."

"I have a question," he said. "Can a couple make it in marriage if they disagree on everything?"

It was one of those theoretical questions that I knew had a personal root. I went right to the point. "How long have you been married?"

"Two years," he responded. "And we don't agree on anything."

"Give me some examples," I said.

"Well, for one thing, Mary doesn't like me to go hunting. I work all week in the mill, and I like to go hunting on Saturdays—not every Saturday but when hunting season is in."

Mary had been silent until this point when she interjected. "When hunting season is out, he goes fishing, and besides that, he doesn't hunt just on Saturdays. He takes off from work to go hunting."

"Once or twice a year I take off two or three days from work to go hunting in the mountains with some buddies," Dave said, irritated. "What's wrong with that?"

"What else do you disagree on?" I asked.

"Well, she wants me to go to church all the time. I don't mind going on Sunday morning, but Sunday night I like to rest. It's all right if she wants to go, but I don't think I ought to have to go."

Again Mary spoke up. "You don't really want me to go either," she said. "You fuss every time I walk out the door."

I knew that things weren't supposed to be getting this hot under a shady tree in front of a church. As a young, aspiring counselor, I feared that I was getting in over my head, but having been trained to ask questions and listen, I continued. "What other things do you disagree on?"

This time Mary answered. "He wants me to stay home all day and work in the house," she said. "He gets mad if I go see my mother or go shopping or something."

"I don't mind her going to see her mother," he said, "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 even started supper. I work hard, and I like to eat when I get home. Besides that, the house is a wreck," he continued. "The baby's things are all over the floor, the baby is dirty, and I don't like filth. She seems to be happy to live in a pigpen. We don't have very much, and we live in a small mill house, but at least it could be clean."

"What's wrong with him helping me around the house?" Mary asked. "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."

Thinking that I had better start looking for solutions rather than prying for more disagreements, I looked at Dave and asked, "Dave, when you were dating, before you got married, did you go hunting or fishing every Saturday?"

"Pretty much, but I always got home in time to go see her on Saturday night. Most of the time, I'd get home in time to wash my truck before I went to see her. I didn't like to go see her with a dirty truck."

As we continued talking, I learned that Mary had gotten married right out of high school and that during her senior year Dave came

to see her almost every night and stayed for supper. "He would help me do my chores around the house and then we'd sit and talk until suppertime."

"Dave, what did the two of you do after supper?" I asked.

He looked up with a sheepish smile and said, "Well, the regular dating stuff, you know."

"But if I had a school project," Mary said, "he'd help me with it. Sometimes we worked hours on school projects. I was in charge of the Christmas float for the senior class. He helped me for three weeks every afternoon. He was great."

I switched gears and focused on the third area of their disagreement. "Dave, when you were dating, did you go to church with Mary on Sunday nights?"

"Yes, I did," he said. "If I didn't go to church with her, I couldn't see her that night. Her father was strict that way."

I thought I was beginning to see some light, but I wasn't sure they were seeing it. I asked Mary, "When you were dating Dave, what convinced you that he really loved you? What made him different from other guys you had dated?"

"It was the way he helped me with everything," she said. "None of the other guys cared about all that. He even helped me wash dishes when he had supper at our house. He was the most incredible person I had ever met, but after we got married that changed."

Turning to Dave, I asked, "Why do you think you did all these things for her before you were married?"

"It just seemed natural for me," he said. "It's what I would want someone to do for me if she cared about me."

"And why do you think you stopped helping her after you got married?" I asked.

"Well, I guess I expected it to be like my family. Dad worked, and Mom took care of things at the house. I never saw my dad do any-

thing around the house. Since Mom stayed home, she did everything—cooking, cleaning, washing, and ironing. I just thought that was the way it was supposed to be.”

Now we were getting somewhere. “Dave, a moment ago what did you hear Mary say when I asked her what really made her feel loved by you when you were dating?”

He responded, “Helping her with things and doing things with her.”

“So, can you understand how she could feel unloved when you stopped helping her with things?” He was nodding yes. I continued. “It was a normal thing for you to follow the model of your mother and father in marriage. Almost all of us tend to do that, but your behavior toward Mary was a radical change from your courtship. The one thing that had assured her of your love disappeared.”

Then I asked Mary, “What did you hear Dave say when I asked, ‘Why did you do all of those things to help Mary when you were dating?’”

“He said that it came naturally to him,” she replied.

“That’s right,” I said, “and he also said that is what he would want someone to do for him if she loved him. He was doing those things for you and with you because in his mind that’s the way anyone shows love. Once you were married and living in your own house, he had expectations of what you would do if you loved him. You would keep the house clean, you would cook, and so on. In brief, you would do things for him to express your love. When he did not see you doing those things, do you understand why he would feel unloved?” Mary was nodding now too. I continued, “My guess is that the reason you are both so unhappy in your marriage is that neither of you is showing your love by doing things for each other.”

Mary said, “I think you’re right, and the reason I stopped doing things for him is because I didn’t like how he bossed me around. It was as if he was trying to make me be like his mother.”

“That’s it,” I said. “No one likes to be forced to do anything. In fact, love is always freely given. Love cannot be demanded. We can request things of each other, but we must never demand anything. Requests give direction to love, but demands stop the flow of love.”

Dave looked thoughtful. “I did boss her around—demand, like you said. I guess I was disappointed in her as a wife. I know I said some cruel things, and I understand how she could be upset with me.”

“I think things can be turned around rather easily at this juncture,” I said. I pulled two note cards out of my pocket. “Let’s try something. I want each of you to sit on the steps of the church and make a request list. Dave, I want you to list three or four things that if Mary chose to do them would make you feel loved when you walk into the house in the afternoon. If making the bed is important to you, then put it down. Mary, I want you to make a list of three or four things that you would really like to have Dave’s help in doing, things which, if he chose to do them, would help you know that he loved you.” (I’m big on lists; they force us to think concretely.)

After five to six minutes, they handed me their lists. Dave’s list read:

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

I read the list out loud and said to Dave, "I'm understanding you to say that if Mary chooses to do these four things, you will view them as acts of love toward you."

"Yeah," he said, "just those four things. That would really make a difference in how I feel about her."

Then I read Mary's list:

- 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 lawn every week in the summer and not let it get so tall that I'm ashamed of our yard.

I said, "Mary, I am understanding you to say that if Dave chooses to do those four things, you would take his actions as genuine expressions of love toward you."

"I would," she said.

"Can you do what she asks, Dave?"

"Yes," he said.

"Mary, what about you? Can you do the things on Dave's list?"

"Yes, I can. In the past, it always seemed like no matter what I did, it was never enough."

I turned to Dave. "Dave, you understand that what I am suggesting is a change from the model of marriage that your mother and father had."

"Oh, my dad cut the grass and washed the car."

"But he didn't change the diapers or vacuum, right?"

"Never!" he said, grinning.

"You don't have to do these, you understand? If you do them, however, it will be an act of love to Mary."

And to Mary I said, “You understand that you don’t have to do these things, but if you want to express love for Dave, here are four ways that will be meaningful to him. I want to suggest that you try these for two months and see if they help. At the end of two months, you may want to add additional requests to your lists and share them with each other. I would not add more than one request per month, however.”

“This really makes sense,” Mary said. “Thank you,” Dave said. They took each other by the hand and walked toward their car. I said to myself out loud, “I think this is what church is all about. I think I am going to enjoy being a counselor.” I have never forgotten the insight I gained under that chinaberry tree.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM DAVE AND MARY

After years of research, I have realized what a unique situation Dave and Mary presented me. Seldom do I meet a couple who both have the same love language—in this case, acts of service. But you may be wondering, Then why were they having so much difficulty? The answer lies in the fact that they were speaking different dialects. They were doing things for each other—but not the most *important* things. When Mary and Dave were forced to think concretely, they easily identified their specific dialects, and when they started speaking them, their love tanks began to fill.

It’s easy to work at the wrong things. A husband could spend an entire long weekend doing chores—raking leaves, preparing the lawn for winter, winding up hoses and putting them away, winterizing the cars, pulling holiday decorations out of the attic, cutting logs for the fireplace—and not add a drop to his wife’s love tank. On the other hand, that same husband could bring home Chinese takeout, clean the kitchen afterward, and then put the

kids to bed on his own while his wife was wiped out after a long day—and fill her love tank to overflowing.

Before we leave our mill town friends, I would like to make three other observations. First, they illustrate clearly that what we do for each other before marriage is no indication of what we will do after marriage. Before marriage, we are carried along by the force of the in-love obsession. After marriage, we revert to being the people we were before we “fell in love.” Our actions are influenced by the model of our parents; our own personality; our perceptions of love; our emotions, needs, and desires. Only one thing is certain about our behavior: It will not be the same behavior we exhibited when we were caught up in being “in love.”

That leads me to the second truth: Love is a choice and cannot be coerced. Dave and Mary were criticizing each other’s behavior and getting nowhere. Once they decided to make requests of each other rather than demands, their marriage began to turn around.

Criticism and demands tend to drive wedges. With enough criticism, you may get acquiescence from your spouse. He may do what you want, but probably it will not be an expression of love. You can give guidance to love by making requests: “I wish you would wash the car, change the baby’s diaper, mow the grass,” but you cannot create the will to love. Each of us must decide daily to love or not to love our spouses. If we choose to love, then expressing it in the way in which our spouse requests will make our love most effective emotionally.

There is a third truth, which only the mature lover will be able to hear. 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. If we understand that, it may help us

process their criticism in a more productive manner. 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. Mary’s constant condemnation of Dave’s hunting was not an expression of her hatred for the sport of hunting. She blamed hunting as the thing that kept him from washing the car, vacuuming the house, and mowing the grass. When he learned to meet her need for love by speaking her emotional love language, she became free to support him in his hunting.

DOORMAT OR LOVER?

“I have served him for twenty years. I have waited on him hand and foot. I have been his doormat while he ignored me, mistreated me, and humiliated me in front of my friends and family. I don’t hate him. I wish him no ill, but I resent him, and I no longer wish to live with him.” That wife has performed acts of service for twenty years, but they have not been expressions of love. They were done out of fear, guilt, and resentment.

A doormat is an inanimate object. You can wipe your feet on it, step on it, kick it around, or whatever you like. It has no will of its own. It can be your servant but not your lover. When we treat our spouses as objects, we preclude the possibility of love. Manipulation by guilt (“If you were a good spouse, you would do this for me”) is not the language of love. Coercion by fear (“You will do this or you will be sorry”) is alien to love. No person should ever be a doormat. We may allow ourselves to be used, but we are in fact creatures of emotion, thoughts, and desires. And we have the ability to make decisions and take action. Allowing oneself to be used or manipulated by another is not an act of love. It is, in fact, an

act of treason. You are allowing him or her to develop inhumane habits. Love says, "I love you too much to let you treat me this way. It is not good for you or me."

Learning the love language of acts of service will require some of us to reexamine our stereotypes of the roles of husbands and wives. These have changed over the last several decades, but models from our past can linger, and different cultures have different expectations of the "right" way things are done in marriage.

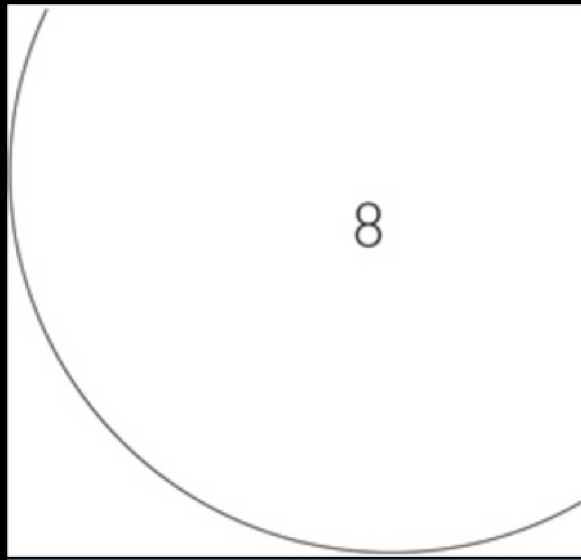
To Dave's credit, he was willing to break from his expectations when he realized how important it was to Mary. That is necessary for all of us if our spouse's primary love language asks something of us that seems inappropriate to our role.

A willingness to examine and change stereotypes is necessary in order to express love more effectively. Remember, there are no rewards for maintaining stereotypes, but there are tremendous benefits to meeting the emotional needs of your spouse. If your spouse's love language is acts of service, then "actions speak louder than words."

Now let's move on to love language number five.

YOUR TURN

Many acts of service will involve household chores, but not all. What are some non-chore ways of serving your mate?



LOVE LANGUAGE #5

Physical Touch

We have long known that physical touch is a way of communicating emotional love. Numerous research projects in the area of child development have made that conclusion: Babies who are held, stroked, and kissed develop a healthier emotional life than those who are left for long periods of time without physical contact.

Physical touch is also 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.

THE POWER OF TOUCH

Of the five senses, touching, unlike the other four, is not limited to one localized area of the body. Tiny tactile receptors are located throughout the body. When those receptors are touched or pressed, nerves carry impulses to the brain. The brain interprets these impulses and we perceive that the thing that touched us is warm or cold, hard or soft. It causes pain or pleasure. We may also interpret it as loving or hostile.

Some parts of the body are more sensitive than others. The difference is due to the fact that the tiny tactile receptors are not scattered evenly over the body but arranged in clusters. Thus, the tip of the tongue is highly sensitive to touch whereas the back of the shoulders is the least sensitive. The tips of the fingers and the tip of the nose are other extremely sensitive areas. Our purpose, however, is not to understand the neurological basis of the sense of touch but rather its psychological importance.

Physical touch can make or break a relationship. It can communicate hate or love. To the person whose primary love language is physical touch, the message will be far louder than the words "I hate you" or "I love you." A slap in the face is detrimental to any child, but it is devastating to a child whose primary love language is touch. A tender hug communicates love to any child, but it shouts love to the child whose primary love language is physical touch. The same is true of adults.

In marriage, the touch of love may take many forms. Since touch receptors are located throughout the body, lovingly touching your spouse almost anywhere can be an expression of love. That does not mean that all touches are created equal. Some will bring more pleasure to your spouse than others. Your best instructor is your spouse, of course. After all, she is the one you are seeking to love.

She knows best what she perceives as a loving touch. Don't insist on touching her in your way and in your time. Learn to speak her love dialect. Your spouse may find some touches uncomfortable or irritating. To insist on continuing those touches is to communicate the opposite of love. It is saying that you are not sensitive to her needs and that you care little about her perceptions of what is pleasant. Don't make the mistake of believing that the touch that brings pleasure to you will also bring pleasure to her.

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. Explicit love touches obviously take more time, not only in actual touching but in developing your understanding of how to communicate love to your spouse this way. If a back massage communicates love loudly to your spouse, then the time, money, and energy you spend in learning to be a good masseur or masseuse will be well invested. If sexual intercourse is your mate's primary dialect, reading about and discussing the art of sexual lovemaking will enhance your expression of love.

Implicit love touches require little time but much thought, especially if physical touch is not your primary love language and if you did not grow up in a "touching family." Sitting close to each other as you watch your favorite television program requires no additional time but may communicate your love loudly. Touching your spouse as you walk through the room where he is sitting takes only a moment. Touching each other when you leave the house and again when you return may involve only a brief kiss or hug but will speak volumes to your spouse.

Once you discover that physical touch is the primary love language of your spouse, you are limited only by your imagination on ways to express love. Coming up with new ways and places to touch can be an exciting challenge. If you have not been an “under-the-table toucher,” you might find that it will add a spark to your dining out. If you are not accustomed to holding hands in public, you may find that you can fill your spouse’s emotional love tank as you stroll through the parking lot. If you don’t normally kiss as soon as you get into the car together, you may find that it will greatly enhance your travels. Hugging your spouse before she goes shopping may not only express love, it may bring her home sooner. Try new touches in new places and let your spouse give you feedback on whether he finds it pleasurable or not. Remember, he has the final word. You are learning to speak his language.

THE BODY IS FOR TOUCHING

Whatever there is of me resides in my body. To touch my body is to touch me. To withdraw from my body is to distance yourself from me emotionally. In our society, shaking hands is a way of communicating openness and social closeness to another individual. When on rare occasions one man refuses to shake hands with another, it communicates a message that things are not right in their relationship. All societies have some form of physical touching as a means of social greeting. The average American male may not feel comfortable with the European bear hug and kiss, but in Europe that serves the same function as our shaking hands.

There are appropriate and inappropriate ways to touch members of the opposite sex in every society. The recent attention to sexual harassment has highlighted the inappropriate ways. Within marriage, however, what is appropriate and inappropriate touching is determined by the couple themselves, within certain

broad guidelines. Physical abuse is of course deemed inappropriate by society, and social organizations have been formed to help “the battered wife and the battered husband.” Clearly our bodies are for touching, but not for abuse.

This age is characterized as the age of sexual openness and freedom. With that freedom, we have demonstrated that the open marriage where both spouses are free to have sexual intimacies with other individuals is fanciful. Those who do not object on moral grounds eventually object on emotional grounds. Something about our need for intimacy and love does not allow us to give our spouse such freedom. The emotional pain is deep and intimacy evaporates when we are aware that our spouse is involved with someone else sexually. Counselors’ files are filled with records of husbands and wives who are trying to grapple with the emotional trauma of an unfaithful spouse. That trauma, however, is compounded for the individual whose primary love language is physical touch. That for which he longs so deeply—love expressed by physical touch—is now being given to another. His emotional love tank is not only empty; it has been riddled by an explosion. It will take massive repairs for those emotional needs to be met.

CRISIS AND PHYSICAL TOUCH

Almost instinctively in a time of crisis, we hug one another. Why? Because physical touch is a powerful communicator of love. In a time of crisis, more than anything, we need to feel loved. We cannot always change events, but we can survive if we feel loved.

All marriages will experience crises. The death of parents is inevitable. Automobile accidents cripple and kill thousands each year. Disease is no respecter of persons. Disappointments are a part of life. 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.

“MARRIAGE IS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY”

Since my first visit to West Palm Beach, Florida, many years ago, I have always welcomed invitations to lead marriage seminars in that area. It was on one such occasion that I met Joe and Maria. They were not native to Florida (few are), but they had lived there for ten years and called West Palm Beach home. They had invited me to spend the night, and I knew from experience that such a request usually meant a late-night counseling session.

As the evening proceeded, I thoroughly enjoyed Joe and Maria's company. I found them to be a healthy, happily married couple. For a counselor, that is an oddity. I was eager to discover their secret, but being extremely tired and knowing that they were going to drive me to the airport the next day, I decided to do my probing when I was feeling more alert and we had forty-five minutes in the car together.

Maria and Joe began to tell me their story. In the early years of their marriage, they had tremendous difficulties. They had grown up in the same community, attended the same church, and graduated from the same high school. They liked the same music, the same sports, the same movies. They seemed to possess all the commonalities that are supposed to assure fewer conflicts in marriage.

They began dating in their senior year in high school. They attended separate colleges but saw each other frequently, and were

married three weeks after he received his degree in business and she a degree in nursing. Two months later, they moved to Florida, where Joe had been offered a good job. The first three months were exciting—moving, finding a new apartment, enjoying life together.

They were about six months into the marriage when Maria began to feel that Joe was withdrawing from her. He was working longer hours, and when he was at home, he spent considerable time with the computer. When she finally expressed her feelings that he was avoiding her, Joe told her that he was not avoiding her but simply trying to stay on top of his job. He said that she didn't understand the pressure he was under and how important it was that he do well in his first year on the job. Maria wasn't pleased, but she decided to give him space.

She began to develop friendships with other wives who lived in the apartment complex. Often when she knew Joe was going to work late, she would go shopping with one of her friends instead of coming straight home after work. Sometimes she was not at home when Joe arrived. That annoyed him greatly, and he accused her of being thoughtless and irresponsible. Maria retorted, "Who's irresponsible? You don't even call me and let me know when you'll be home. How can I be here for you when I don't even know when you'll be here? And when you are here, you spend all your time working. You don't need a wife; all you need is a computer!"

To which Joe shot back, "I do need a wife. Don't you understand? That's the whole point. I *do* need a wife."

But Maria did not understand. She was extremely confused. In her search for answers, she went to the public library and checked out several books on marriage. "Marriage is not supposed to be this way," she reasoned. "I have to find an answer to our situation." When Joe went on his laptop, Maria would pick up her book. In

fact on many evenings, she read until midnight. On his way to bed, Joe would notice her and make sarcastic comments such as, “If you read that much in college, you would have made straight As.” Maria would respond, “I’m not in college. I’m in marriage, and right now, I’d be satisfied with a C.” Joe went to bed without so much as a second glance.

At the end of the first year, Maria was desperate. She had mentioned it before, but this time she calmly said to Joe, “I am going to find a marriage counselor. Do you want to go with me?”

But Joe answered, “I don’t need a marriage counselor. I don’t have time to go to a marriage counselor. I can’t afford a marriage counselor.”

“Then I’ll go alone,” said Maria.

“Fine, you’re the one who needs counseling anyway.”

The conversation was over. Maria felt totally alone, but the next week she made an appointment with a marriage therapist. After three sessions, the counselor called Joe and asked if he would be willing to come in to talk about his perspective on their marriage. Joe agreed, and the process of healing began. Six months later, they left the counselor’s office with a new marriage.

I said to them, “What did you learn in counseling that turned your marriage around?”

“In essence, Dr. Chapman,” Joe said, “we learned to speak each other’s love language. The counselor did not use that term, but as you gave the lecture today, it came to me. My mind raced back to our counseling experience, and I realized that’s exactly what happened to us. We finally learned to speak each other’s love language.”

“So what is your love language, Joe?” I asked.

“Physical touch,” he said without hesitation.

“Physical touch for sure,” said Maria.

“And yours, Maria?”

“Quality time, Dr. Chapman. That’s what I was crying for in those days while he was spending all his time with his job and his computer.”

“How did you learn that physical touch was Joe’s love language?”

“It took awhile,” Maria said. “Little by little, it began to come out in the counseling. At first, I don’t think he even realized it.”

“It’s true,” Joe said. “I never told her that I wanted to be touched, although I was crying inside for her to reach out and touch me. In our dating relationship, I had always taken the initiative in touching, but she had always been responsive. I felt that she loved me, but after we got married, there were times that I reached out to her physically and ... nothing. Maybe with her new job responsibilities, she was too tired. I don’t know, but I took it personally. I felt that she didn’t find me attractive. Then I decided I wouldn’t even try because I didn’t want to be rejected. So I waited to see how long it would be before she’d initiate a kiss or a touch or sexual intercourse. Once I waited for six weeks before she touched me at all. I couldn’t stand it. My withdrawal was to stay away from the pain I felt when I was with her.”

Then Maria said, “I had no idea that was what he was feeling. I knew that he was not reaching out to me. We weren’t touching all the time like we did when we were dating, but I just assumed that since we were married, that was not as important to him now.

“I did go weeks without touching him. It didn’t cross my mind. I was working, taking care of things at home, and trying to stay out of his way. I honestly didn’t know what else I could be doing. I didn’t understand why he wasn’t paying attention to me. The thing is, spending time with me is what made me feel loved and appreciated. It really didn’t matter whether we hugged or kissed. As long as he gave me his attention, I felt loved.”

Once Joe and Maria discovered they were not meeting each other's need for love, they began to turn things around. "It was like I had a new husband," she said.

"What amazed me at the seminar today," Joe added, "was the way your lecture on love languages carried me back all these years to that experience. You said in twenty minutes what it took us six months to learn."

"Well," I said, "it's not how fast you learn it but how well you learn it that matters. And obviously, you have learned it well."

Joe is only one of many individuals for whom physical touch is the primary love language. Emotionally, they yearn for their spouse to reach out and touch them physically. Running the hand through the hair, giving a back rub, holding hands, embracing, sexual intercourse—all of those and other "love touches" are the emotional lifeline of the person for whom physical touch is the primary love language.

YOUR TURN

Recall some nonsexual "touching times" that enhanced intimacy between the two of you. What made these times special?
