



## The Five Languages of Love

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**Author:** Gary Chapman

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**Author's bio:** Gary Chapman, Ph.D., in addition to his church educational responsibilities, directs marriage seminars throughout the country and counsels married couples regularly. He is the author of *Toward a Growing Marriage*, *Hope for the Separated*, and *Building Relationships*.

**Author's Big Thought:** People express and receive love in different ways. Dr. Gary Chapman identifies these as the five love languages. If you express love in a way your partner doesn't understand, he or she won't feel you expressed love at all. The problem is that you are speaking two different languages.

### **Chapter notes:**

#### Chapter One: What Happens To Love After The Wedding?

The desire for romantic love in marriage is deeply rooted in our psychological makeup. Books, TV programs, magazine articles abound on the subject. Keeping love alive in marriages is a serious business.

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?

The answer to these questions is the purpose to this book. The problem is that what has been overlooked is one fundamental truth: People speak different love languages. We feel most comfortable speaking our own primary language, such as English. We may learn additional languages but usually with more effort. We speak and understand our native language with the most comfort. The more we use a secondary language, the more comfortable we are conversing in it. In the area of love it is similar. Your emotional love language and the language of your partner may be as different as

Chinese from English. Being sincere is not enough. We must be willing to learn our partner's primary love language if we are to be effective communicators of love.

The author's conclusion after twenty years of marriage counseling is that there are basically five emotional love languages. Five ways that people speak and understand emotional love. Similar to the field of linguistics, within the five 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 partner.

Seldom do partners have the same primary love language. We tend to speak our primary love language and get confused when we are not understood when communicating. We are expressing our love, but the message does not come through, because we are speaking, what to them, is a foreign language. 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 or partner, we will then have the needed information to apply the ideas we read in books and articles.

The key to a long-lasting loving relationship lies in understanding and communicating the love we feel in a way that will be understood.

## Chapter 2: Keeping the Love Tank Full

Psychologists have concluded that the need to feel loved is a primary human emotional need. For love, we will climb mountains, cross seas, and endure untold hardships. 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 love food, objects, nature and people. The kind of love that is essential to our emotional health is the focus of this book.

The author likes the following metaphor: "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. The emotional need for love is not simply a childhood phenomenon. That need follows us into adulthood and marriage. The "in love" experience temporarily fills that need, but it is inevitably a quick fix, and has a limited and predictable life span. After we come down from the high of the "in love" experience, the emotional need for love resurfaces because it is fundamental to our nature.

At the heart of man'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. The author is convinced that keeping the emotional love tank full is as important to a marriage as maintaining the proper oil level in your car. Warning: Understanding the five love languages and learning to speak the primary love language of your spouse or partner may radically affect his or her behavior. People behave differently when their emotional love tanks are full.

### Chapter 3: Falling in Love

Most of us enter marriage by way of the "in love" experience. We meet someone whose physical characteristics and personality traits create enough electrical shock to trigger our "love alert" system. The bells go off and we set in motion the process of getting to know the person. Things either get more intense after or that or we realize this is not the person for us.

When feeling "in love" is reciprocal, we start talking about marriage because everyone agrees that being "in love" is the necessary foundation for a good marriage. At its peak, the "in love" experience is euphoric. The person who is "in love" has the illusion that their beloved is perfect. Others may see the flaws, but he or she is oblivious.

Our dreams before marriage are of marital bliss. It's hard to believe anything else when you're in love. We have been led to believe that if we are really in love, it will last forever. Unfortunately, the eternality of the "in love" experience is fiction, not fact. Studies have shown that the average life span of a romantic obsession is two years. If it is a secretive love affair, it may last a little longer. Welcome to the real world of marriage, where hairs are always on the sink and little white spots cover the mirror, where arguments center on whether the lid should be up or down.

The bad information was the idea that the "in love" obsession would last forever. A casual observation should have taught us that if people remained obsessed, we would all be in serious trouble. People who are "in love" lose interest in other pursuits.

Once the experience of falling in love has run its course, we will return to the world of reality and begin to assert ourselves. The "in love" experience does not focus on our own growth nor on the growth and development of the other person.

We can recognize the "in love" experience for what it is, a temporary emotional high, and pursue "real love" with our spouse or partner. That kind of love is emotional in nature but not obsessional. It is a love that unites reason and emotion. It involves the act of the will and requires discipline, and it recognizes the need for personal growth. Our most basic emotional need is not to fall in love but to be genuinely loved by another, to know that love grows out of reason and choice.

That kind of love requires effort and discipline. It is the choice to spend energy in an effort to benefit the other person, knowing that if his or her life is enriched by your effort, you too will find a sense of satisfaction, the satisfaction of having genuinely loved another. True love cannot begin until the "in love" experience has run its course.

If love is a choice, then couples have the capacity to love after the "in love" obsession. Understanding the five emotional love languages and discovering your partner's primary love language can make your efforts at love most productive.

## Chapter 4: Love language # 1: Words of Affirmation

One way to express love emotionally is to use words that build the other person up. 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 so sharp in that suit".

The author does not recommend verbal flattery in order to get 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, when we receive affirming words we are far more likely to reciprocate and do something our spouse desires.

Another dialect is *encouraging words* - or to "inspire courage". Perhaps your spouse has untapped potential in one or more areas of life. That potential may be awaiting your encouraging words. Encouragement requires empathy and seeing the world from your spouse's perspective. We must first learn what is important to them.

If we are to communicate love verbally, we must use *kind words*. Sometimes our words are saying one thing, but our tone of voice is saying another. 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, is all important. Use *humble words*. Love makes requests, not demands. If they come across as demands, we have erased the possibility of intimacy and will drive our spouse away. A request introduces the element of choice. Love is always a choice - that is what makes it meaningful. A request creates the possibility for an expression of love, whereas a demand suffocates that possibility.

Words of affirmation are one of the five basic love languages. Within that language there are many dialects a few of which have been discussed. All of the dialects have in common the use of words to affirm one's spouse.

## Chapter 5: Love Language #2: Quality Time

Quality time means looking at each other and *talking*, giving your undivided attention. That twenty or more minutes of time will never be had again: we are giving our lives to each other. It is a powerful communicator of love.

A central aspect of quality time is togetherness. Togetherness has to do with focused attention. The activity is incidental. The important thing emotionally is spending focused time with each other. The activity is the vehicle that creates the sense of togetherness.

Like words of affirmation, the language of quality time has many dialects. One of the most common is that of quality conversation. This means sympathetic dialogue where two individuals are sharing their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires in a friendly, uninterrupted context. 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*. One person will ask questions, not in a badgering manner but with a genuine desire to understand the thoughts, feelings, and desires of their partner.

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.

Here are some practical tips on good listening:

1. Maintain eye contact when your spouse is talking
2. Don't listen to your spouse and do something at the same time
3. Listen for feelings
4. Observe body language
5. Refuse to interrupt

Quality conversation requires not only sympathetic listening but also self-revelation. This doesn't come easy for some people. By the time we have reached adulthood, many of us have learned to deny our feelings. We are no longer in touch with our emotional selves.

If you need to learn the language of quality conversations, begin by noting the emotions you feel away from home. Write down your feelings in a note pad and a word or two to help you remember the event corresponding to the feeling. Do that exercise three times a day, and you will develop an awareness of your emotional nature. Eventually you will feel comfortable discussing your emotions toward your spouse. Remember, emotions themselves are neither good nor bad. They are simply our psychological responses to the events of life.

Another dialect of quality time is quality activities. 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 has an interest. 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.

## Chapter 6: Love Language #3: Receiving Gifts

A gift is something you can hold in your hand and say "Look, he was thinking of me," or "She remembered me". The gift is a symbol of thought and the thought remains not only in the mind but is expressed in actually securing the gift and giving it as an expression of love.

Gifts are visual symbols of love and symbols have emotional value. Visual symbols are more important to some people than to others. To the individual whose primary language is receiving gifts, the cost of the gift will matter little, unless it is greatly out of line than you can afford. Gifts can be purchased, found, or made if your spouse's primary love language is receiving gifts, you can become a proficient gift giver. In fact, it's one of the easiest love languages to learn. If your spouse 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/his primary love language.

If you are a saver, you will experience emotional resistance to the idea of spending money as an expression of love. But that attitude fails to recognize that you are purchasing things for yourself. Purchasing gifts for a spouse whose primary love language is receiving gifts is the best investment you can make. You are investing in your relationship and filling your love's emotional love tank, and with a full love tank, he or she will likely reciprocate emotional love to you in a language you will understand.

There is an intangible gift that sometimes speaks more loudly than a gift that can be held in one's hand. This is the gift of self or the gift of presence. 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. If the physical presence of your spouse is important to you, verbalize that - don't expect him/her to read your mind.

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.

## Chapter 7: Love Language #4: Acts of Service

Acts of service means 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. These acts require thought, planning, time, effort, and energy. If done with a positive spirit, they are indeed expressions of love.

When this is the primary language of one's spouse, he may have expectations of what you would do if you loved him. No one likes to be forced to do anything. Love is always freely given and 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.

After years of research, the author realized that seldom did he meet a couple who both have the same love language. Even if a couple does have the same language they may be speaking different

dialects. For example, two people who share the primary language of acts of service may have been doing things for each other but not the most important things.

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".

Love is a choice and cannot be coerced. Each of us must choose 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.

A spouse's criticism about behavior provides the clearest clue to her primary love language. People tend to criticize their spouse most loudly in the area where they themselves have the deepest emotional need. Their criticism is an ineffective way of pleading for love.

Learning the love language of acts of service will require some of us to reexamine our stereotypes of the roles of husbands and wives. Due to the sociological changes of the past thirty years, there is no longer a common stereotype of the male and female role in American society.

### Chapter 8: 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, hugged, and kissed develop a healthier emotional life than those who are left for long periods without physical contact.

Physical touch is a powerful vehicle for communicating marital love. 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.

Sexual intercourse is only one dialect in the love language of physical touch. The touch of love may take many forms. Don't make the mistake 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 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 when you pour a cup of coffee. 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 language of your spouse, you are limited only by your imagination in ways to express love.

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. If your spouse's primary language is physical touch, nothing is more important than holding her as she cries. Crises provide a unique opportunity for expressing love.

### Chapter 9: Discovering your Primary Love Language

The mistake common to many men is assuming that Physical Touch is their primary love language because they desire sexual intercourse so intensely. For the male, sexual desire is physically based. For the female, sexual desire is rooted in her emotions, not her physiology. If she feels loved and admired and appreciated by her husband, then she has a desire to be physically intimate with him. But without the emotional closeness she may have little physical desire.

When, in fact, his wife speaks his primary love language and his emotional tank is full, and he speaks her primary love language, and her emotional tank is full, the sexual aspect of their relationship will take care of itself. Most sexual problems in marriage have little to do with physical technique and everything to do with meeting emotional needs.

How do you find out which is your primary love language? It may help to look at the negative use of love languages. What does your spouse do or fail to do or say that hurts you deeply? For example, if your deepest hurt is that your spouse seldom gives you quality time, then that is your primary love language. Another approach is to look back over your marriage and discover what you have most requested. Examine what you do or say to express love to your spouse. Chances are what you are doing for her is what you wish she would do for you. This last approach is only a possible clue to your love language; it is not an absolute behavior.

There are two kinds of people who may have difficulty discovering their primary love language. The first is the individual whose emotional tank has been full for a long time. The second is the individual whose love tank has been empty for so long that he doesn't remember what makes him feel loved.

Write down what you think is your primary love language. Then list the other four in order of importance.

### Chapter 10: Love is a Choice

We are creatures of choice. Poor choices in the past don't mean that we must make them in the future. Instead we can say, "I'm sorry. I know I have hurt you, but I would like to make the future different. I would like to love you in your language. I would like to meet your needs". Marriages have been rescued from the brink of divorce when couples make the choice to love.

Love doesn't erase the past, but it makes the future different. When we choose active expressions of love in the primary love language of our spouse, we create an emotional climate where we can deal with our past conflicts and failures.

Thousands of husbands and wives have been emotionally empty, wanting to do the right thing, not wanting to hurt anyone, but being pushed by their emotional needs to seek love outside the marriage. The "in love experience" temporarily meets one's emotional need for love. In time, we come down from that natural high back to the real world. If our spouse has learned to speak our primary language, our need for love will continue to be satisfied. If, on the other hand, he or she does not speak our love language, our tank will slowly drain, and we will no longer feel loved. Meeting that need in one's spouse is definitely a choice.

What if the love language of your spouse is something that doesn't come naturally to you? When an action doesn't come naturally it is a greater expression of love.

**Reviewer's recommendation:** We are all in relationships of one sort or another - with our spouse, significant other, children, parents and business partners and associates. These same concepts relate to all relationships. How would your life be different if those you cared about understood that as clearly as you do? Love may make the difference.



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Frumi is a trusted advisor and leadership coach. She has a passion for helping business leaders, especially entrepreneurs and financial services leaders. She helps them find clarity out of chaos, communicate effectively with their teams, and accelerate their business results. Frumi is a former CEO and CFO herself and has an MBA and a PhD in business administration. She is known as a catalyst for change and when Frumi shows up with dynamite and band aids, change is bound to happen!