

The Five Love Languages of the Christian Marriage Part 1

We are at the end of our series on the family. In the last month, we have covered two lessons on marriage with the Song of Solomon, four lessons on raising and rescuing our Christian children and two lessons on the church family at Camp Hill. The last three lessons in the series will be on the marriage relationship.

Recently I re-read an old, but great book lately called *The Five Love Languages* by a religious family counselor named Gary Chapman. The publication analyzes how a couple must learn to express a heartfelt commitment to each other in order to make the marriage work. Though it is the Bible that we must always appeal to first concerning the core of our teaching and preaching in the church, we would be foolish to ignore the thoughts of experts that boldly confirm what we know to be true from the Holy Scriptures. That is what will be accomplished here in these last three lessons.

I do not know if you have noticed or perhaps I am the only one paying attention (I doubt it), but have you observed that marital bliss seems to wither a couple of years following the wedding? The typical Christian marriage starts out with a man and a woman deeply and emotionally attached to each other. The couple in the early stages of the relationship will typically spend a great amount of time and money cultivating that warm and fuzzy feeling that we like to call love. I remember when Jana and I were first going out together; we spent many hours on the phone, at least three or four hours a night, just chatting and getting to know each other. There was actually one call that was extremely lengthy early on that stood out. I got off work about 10 PM and upon arriving home, talked with her on the phone until the next morning. The primary reason I had to end the call was not that I was tired, but that I had to return to work. Yes we were tired, but we were in LOVE!!! This is the courting and honeymoon stage of the relationship and according to research lasts from six month to two years.

We could do nothing wrong and everything right, so we thought. We could not wait to talk to each other or see each other or to learn more about each other. We married and in less than a couple of years it changed. I used to talk with her for hours on end, but now it diminished to a few quick words in a busy day. In the beginning we ate “Raman-noodle Surprise” by candlelight, but within two years we had settled for the “99 Cent Double-stack with Cheese” at the dive-thru at Wendy’s. We went from the “not being able to spend enough time together” mode to the “not spending enough time together” default mode. In the beginning we focused on what we had in common and two years later in what our differences were. This is often true in any relationship, even our relationship to God, for we go from HOT to COLD.

- Rev 2:4-5 'But I have {this} against you, that you have left your first love. 5 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first...’
- Heb 2:1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away {from it.}
- Luke 8:13 "...when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no {firm} root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.”

The Five Love Languages of the Christian Marriage Part 1

In early marriage of a man and woman, they are still in the discovery mode. Once this is over, so also is the newness of the relationship. At that point it is extremely important to have in place a good communication structure in the relationship.

Dr. Chapman proposes and uses in his counseling practice that there are five love languages that make up all human relationships. He says that they are particularly important in the marital relationship and act as glue to hold the matrimony together. The five love languages he discusses are clearly found in scripture; and from that Biblical perspective we will draw our discussion. The five love languages of marriage are 1) Words of Encouragement 2) Quality Time 3) Receiving Gifts 4) Acts of Service and 5) Physical Touch.

We are all Multi-lingual in the Beginning

Though it is common to appreciate all five of these languages of love in our relationships, there is the reality that we tend to have a greatest response to only one. In the early dating and courting mode, we tend to communicate all five at our possible future spouse. Think back to when you first dated and the flame that was magnetic in your relationship.

- Words of Encouragement. You said all those things that gave them joy. “How do I love thee; Let me count the ways.” “That’s what I like about you!”
- Quality Time: You could not spend enough time with them, calling on the phone, going to the movies, church events or on dates. You hung out all the time.
- Receiving Gifts: He bought you flowers, candy and other gifts. She bought you those itchy turtle-neck sweaters and stocking caps that kept your head warm.
- Acts of Service: You couldn’t wait to serve one another. If her car broke down or the sink was leaking, you were there. If you were hungry, she couldn’t wait to make you a meal.
- Physical Touch: You enjoyed the physical touch of holding hands, sitting on the park bench or holding each other in one-another’s arms.

When we first met our spouse-to-be, we were multi-lingual in the relationship. We put our best foot forward, wanting to win that heart to the relationship. We spoke all five love languages, not wanting this “catch to get away.” It is by that means that we won the heart of our spouse, for when you speak all five love languages you will by default speak their primary at one time or another.

The problem is that during the two-year or less period of high-energy, multi-lingual pursuit, we learn that we cannot keep it up. We end up defaulting to our own favorite language of love instead of our spouses and vice-versa. When that occurs, it can bring great damage to the relationship, particularly if that language is not the spouses primary. I can not tell you how many times I have heard from people struggling in their relationships saying how much things have changed.

- “He used to buy me all these gifts.”
- “She used to love to spend time with me.”
- “He used to write me poetry and love letters”

The Five Love Languages of the Christian Marriage Part 1

- “She used to love to hold me.”
- “He used to love to help around the house”

Often times this is an indication of the neglect and lack of communication of not speaking their own personal favorite love language. This is why it is so important to know what your love language is and that of your spouse's, for in knowing this, they can begin to minister to one another in the proper way.

We must make the transition from working hard to working smart. We must learn our spouse's primary language and they ours in order to make the greatest gains. Let us cover the five love languages through the eyes of the Bible and learn to work smart instead of hard by learning to speak fluently the love language of our spouse.

1. Words of Encouragement

The word ENCOURAGE means “to inspire courage”. We as Christians all have an obligation to inspire courage in one another. This was an extremely important language to be used in the early church in order to “inspire courage” in them to continue on the straight and narrow path.

- Tychicus was sent to encourage the Colossians. Col 4:8 For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know {about} our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts;
- Timothy was sent to encourage the Thessalonians. 1Thes 3:2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,
- Barnabas encouraged the saints at Antioch Acts 11:23 Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and {began} to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain {true} to the Lord;
- The Thessalonians were instructed to encourage one another. 1Thes 5:11 Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

This is a love language that we must be willing to speak to each other among ourselves.

- Heb 3:13 “...encourage one another day after day, as long as it is {still} called Today...”
- Heb 10:25 “but encouraging {one} another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”

We are always needed to be willing to encourage those in the church that need it in order for them to stay faithful to the Lord. We are obligated to “install courage” in one another, particularly in those that have lost heart in their pursuit of Jesus.

I want you to know that this is my natural love language. I have always liked to lift the spirits of others who headed down the wrong path. This is why I became a preacher, for I love to encourage others into doing the right thing. I discourages (removes courage) from

The Five Love Languages of the Christian Marriage Part 1

me to see people not living up to their potential. I must tell you that the primary reason that I have stayed here for as long as I have is because you all have done very well in encouraging me. I can think of at least twenty members of the congregation that I have received an encouraging card from in the last five years. I can think of at twice that that have called or spoken appreciation to me in the same period of time. I may not always show it, but I appreciate you and internalize this in my heart. It keeps me strong and focused for the task at hand. If I am working hard for the church, it is primarily because you are a primary source of encouragement to me.

This is even more important in a marriage. It was not until first reading about it here that this love language stood out to me. My wife has for the most part been pretty good about this. She often encourages me as her husband, the father to our children and as a preacher to the church. If I do not receive encouragement from her following preaching on Sunday, I feel empty. It is common for me to ask her if she liked the lesson because I want her encouragement more than anything. Because she so often showers me with encouragement, I often will joke our kids by saying within her earshot, “Mom always said I would never amount to anything!” They will smile and say “You know that is not true.” She was a good choice for a wife.

Is this your love language? Do you long to be loved in this way? What happens in a marriage when one of the spouse’s love language is “Words of Encouragement” and they are not being loved in such a way?

Illustration

Allison had always liked to write. Later in her college career, she took a few courses on journalism. She quickly learned 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 vocation and caught up in the pressure of climbing the corporate ladder. 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 for him to pick up one of Allison’s articles and read it. When he was 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 are an excellent writer. This stuff ought to be published! You write clearly. Your words paint pictures that I can visualize. You have a fascinating style. You have to submit this stuff to

The Five Love Languages of the Christian Marriage Part 1

some magazines.” “Do you really think so?” Allison asked hesitantly. “I know so,” Keith said. “I’m telling you this stuff 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 reasoned that she was a different person now. Her writing was better. She had had many 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 fourteen years ago. Allison has had numerous articles 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. (The Five Love Languages pages 42-43)

If this is your spouse’s primary love language, there are many ways that you can speak it to them.

- Write a card telling them why you appreciate them.
- Write a poem expressing your appreciation your spouse.
- Compliment them many times a day.
- Praise them in front of the children and others.
- Memorize encouraging verses from the Bible and say it to them.

It may not come naturally to you in the beginning, but it will come easier down the road. When your spouse begins to open up to your encouraging words and grow warmer to you, then you will want to speak it more often. I shudder to think about all the marriages that might have been saved had a “Starved for Encouragement” spouse would have only been loved in a way that they called for. You are the one in control of your own actions. Make sure you speak this language fluently if this is your spouse’s need.