Languages of Love

Third in the series, “Values that Build Loving Relationships.”

# Key idea: The five languages of love help us show love in practical ways.

# Key Verse: Ephesians 5:1, 2 NRSV

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

# Intro:

## Loving others in practical ways is a key sign that we are the people of God

We've been talking about the way of love. Notice the key verse for today in Ephesians chapter 5 verses one and two. Last week we talked about three practical steps in showing friendship love. They were: prioritizing people, doing acts of kindness, and forgiving and bearing with one another. These are three ways we fulfill the Bible’s commands to us concerning loving each other of which this command in Ephesians is only one of many. Remember also that Jesus said that how we love others is the key sign of our identity as the people of God.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35 NIV

## Five more ways

Today I want to continue talking about practical ways that we show love to one another. A resource that has helped me frame today's message is a famous book by Gary Chapman titled, "The Five Love Languages." It actually became the first of several books in his series about how we show love and receive love in relationships. I also read and highly recommend his book "The Five Love Languages of Children” which is meant for helping parents apply these concepts specifically to child-rearing. He also has one, "The Five Love Languages of Teen-agers,” another that is a Singles edition and one that is a men's edition.

Gary Chapman discovered the importance of these five behaviors in his work helping couples who no longer felt they were in love to rediscover love. He discovered what we know in our heads but still don't necessarily practice--which is that there is a big difference between saying, "I love you” and the other person actually getting the message and feeling loved. How can we be sure our message of love is getting through to our spouse? To our children? To our teenagers? And to others for whom we care deeply?

## **One word of warning:**

Unfortunately, each of these five languages of love can also be used falsely or in hypocrisy. So I need to say up front that today’s advocacy assumes that we are talking about healthy expressions of love that have integrity and have the best interest of the one being loved in mind. One of the tough tasks of parenting older children is helping them learn to distinguish true expressions of love from false ones. It takes growing in maturity and discernment to be able to tell when someone is using languages of love to manipulate, take advantage of, or even trap a person rather because they genuinely care for them. Even adults have trouble with that distinction. But it is not the fault of the languages of love that they are often misused. In fact it is a witness to their power to communicate.

What are these five key behaviors that Gary Chapman recommends? Can we see them in the Bible teaching and in Jesus' example? These are great questions. So let's dig right in. As a memory device, I need some volunteers to help today. So I’ll be asking for mime’s to represent each point. I’ll ask you to come up at the beginning of the point and present the mime and then be seated and then come up at the end along with all the other and present it again when we reviews the five languages of love.

# Words of Affirmation

## Key verse: Eph. 4:29 NIV

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

## Mime: A teacher affirming a student or writing an affirming note on a paper.

## Today’s opportunity

I mentioned last week with regard to the political situation in a country that I believed this time in history is an opportunity for the church. Here is one of the circumstances where we have an opportunity. Have any of you noticed that since the last election cycle, language seems to have deteriorated? For example, I’ve noticed people feel like it is okay to use more bad words on Facebook than they did before. I suspect this trend is generalizing unfortunately. But this makes a great opportunity for the church to speak prophetically and act courageously in opposition to the language trends of our culture. The Bible holds up a high standard for the language of Christian people.

This verse in Ephesians chapter 4:29 is just the beginning. Our words are not to be unwholesome. They are to be such as encourage and build up other people—grace-giving as the NRSV translates. Rather than words which incite other people to anger, the Bible encourages the people of God to use gentle answers which take away wrath (Proverbs 15:1). Ephesians 5:4 instructs us plainly that obscenities and vulgarities are off limits for Christians. The Bible standard doesn’t care which party you are, but it does care how you talk.

If you have to change your language when children are in the room—if you have to change your sentence structure when the preacher is at the door, friends, your language is not up to the standard that God would have it be!

How much worse it is when language deteriorates between lovers! I knew a couple once that when they got in an argument, what happened then was so dysfunctional that it was worse than the original cause of the arguments.

James has a warning for us.

Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. James 1:26

Ouch! (Friends, if you come to church to get your ears tickled with pleasant platitudes, good luck. Where I come from, we come to church to get challenged by the Holy Spirit to live up to God’s standards, even when or especially when we’d rather not hear it. For that’s probably exactly when we need to hear it the most. Spiritually mature people come to church listening for exactly that place where the Holy Spirit crosses swords with the status quo of their lives because that is what gives us the precious information as to where the growing edge of our spiritual life is for that time.)

# Quality Time

## Key Verse: Mark 6:31-32 NIV

Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

## Mime: A pastor’s wife calls a widow and offers to meet her for lunch for her birthday.

## Spending time shows love

The second way that we can demonstrate love in a very practical way is to spend time with someone we love. That should go without saying. But husbands and wives today are allowing the busyness of two jobs and multiple commitments on behalf of children’s activities to crowd out time for each other. Then later they tell their marriage counselor weakly, “We grew apart.” Parents try to spend money on their children or give them an iPad to keep them busy when what the children really need is loving attention. For young children, attention is the currency of love. Look them in the eyes and be present. If you don’t pay attention to them and spend some time with them, you will have an extremely difficult time communicating that you love them.

I know life is busy and we don’t live in the fifties anymore or even the 80’s. A few years ago, research was showing that the discretionary time of parents had actually declined as the decades progressed. It is not our imagination that things are busier now.

But the human fact remains that quality time is a key way we send and receive love. How do we adjust? I suggest that Sabbaths of various kinds have become even more essential. The weekly Sabbath commitment that there is one day set aside which has different priorities can help a family immensely. The yearly vacation time is a great time for parents to pay attention to one another and to their children. Skipping vacation is not a good habit. Couples’ evening out is a great habit. Taking a child out for a one-on-one walk or for breakfast is a great idea. Let your creativity take over. Remember, “Togetherness has to do with focused attention” (The Five Love Languages p. 63).

“The essential ingredients of 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.” (p. 75)

# Giving and Receiving Gifts

## Key Verse: Acts 10:3, 4

One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!” Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.

Cornelius showed his love for God and for others by giving gifts. Giving and receiving gifts is a love language that can help us express love at other seasons besides Christmas and Valentine’s Day.

## Mime: a parishioner gives a friend a jar of homemade pickles

## Giving gifts works if the other person’s love language is receiving gifts

I think we understand this one because of Christmas so I won’t spend a lot of time on it. But giving and receiving gifts is one of our love languages. However, it is important to be sure that the language of the one giving and the one receiving match. Gary Chapman instructs us that a person usually has one or two main love languages. Their spouse needs to be careful to speak to them in those languages. For example, if your spouse’s love language is not gifts, he or she will probably appreciate them politely but not really get the message of love in the way that is intended. Or he or she may be more interested in how much you spent than in the gift. This principle is true with all the five love languages. One needs to know that the language you are using to speak with is the language that is best received and most appreciated by the one you are communicating to.

# Acts of Service

## Key Verse: Mark 1:32-34 NIV

 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons,

Jesus was a servant to many. His example of service is unsurpassed.

## Mime: A caregiver asks a friend to sit in while they do some errands.

##  Jesus is an example of service as an expression of love

When it comes to acts of service as an expression of love, we have only to look to the example of Jesus to see how important they are. In the passage that we read this morning, Jesus served many people by healing them, he helped others by casting out demons.

The premier example of Jesus serving other in love comes in the upper room just hours before Jesus is crucified. The Apostle John in describing the incident prefaces his description with an important phrase,

“As He had loved those who were His own in the world, He loved them to the last and to the highest degree. John 13:1 AMP

How did he do this, he took a towel, and performed the most menial task of the evening, the washing of feet. This task was usually performed by the lowest servant of the household, but in this case, since it was a borrowed room, there was no one present assigned to the task. The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest among them, so none of them was inclined to perform a task usually assigned to the least. So Jesus took the towel and performed the servant’s task. In doing so he taught us that service was a high expression of love.

Those whom we truly love, we should be glad to serve when needed and when it will communicate well our affection for them.

# Physical Touch

## Key Verses: Mark 1:40-42

 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

 Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

## Mark 10:16

And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

## Mime: A church usher who is a hugger greets another parishioner with a hug.

NICU in a hospital is an amazing place. I had occasion to visit in one some time ago. One feels like you shouldn’t touch anything when you see those precious tiny babies in their life-sustaining chambers. Yet doctors and nurses have learned that touch is essential if the babies are to be healthy. So they find ways to promote healthy touches for the tiny babies. The fact is that “Babies who are held, hugged, and kissed develop a healthier emotional life than those who are left for long periods of time without physical contact.” (The Five Love Languages p. 115)

Jesus knew the importance of touch. When he interacted with the children, what are we told that he did? He took them in his arms and put his hands on them and blessed them. That is why we follow his example today in blessing babies. That is why pastor’s touch during baptism ceremonies and during prayers for healing too.

What did Jesus do in the healing of the leper? He broke all protocol of his time. Lepers were not to be touched. It made the person who touched them unclean. It was known even then to be a contagious disease and so you didn’t touch a leper. But this also made it a terribly isolating disease. Those who were diagnosed with it had to leave their home and never be touched again by any of their loved ones. Imagine that social isolation. But in his one touch of love in reaching across that forbidden space created by this social isolation Jesus communicated love along with his miraculous healing power.

Touch is one of the languages of love. A Father pats his son on the shoulder when he gives him a compliment. A Mom hugs her child tight to comfort them. A lover tenderly touches the face of his beloved. A friend grasps the hand of his friend with both hands instead of one. A pastor encourages a group to join hands with one another in a circle of prayer. Touch is integral to our expression of love. Here’s another place where it is very important to know who appreciates this language and who doesn’t. Another way to say it is, “Some people are huggers and some aren’t.” Some of that has to do with our love languages.

# Conclusion

How can we tell what the love language of another person is?

1. If the relationship is close, such as in marriage, ask them? What things that I do make you feel most loved?
2. Surprisingly, listen to the areas they criticize you in. Gary Chapman says, “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 have the deepest emotional need” (The Five Love Languages p. 107).
3. Observe which of the five things you do are most effective. To which kinds of loving expressions does the other person respond the best?

**Remember, Love makes the difference!**

By using the love languages wisely, our attempts to be loving will communicate effectively.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 1 John 4:16