

Introduction

Many years ago I encountered a book that altered the way I looked at the world, it is called, The Five Love Languages, by Gary Chapman. The book claims that there are five different way to demonstrate love. These “languages” of love have different significance and importance to everyone. The idea is that if you understand the love languages and can recognize them, then you will be better able to “speak” the languages in ways that make everyone feel loved. His 5 Love Languages are:

- Gifts
- Quality Time
- Words of Affirmation
- Physical Touch
- Acts of Service

People who express love through gifts enjoy tangible tokens of affection. Not necessarily large or expensive things; notes, flowers or bringing you a cup of coffee in the morning. A postcard when you are away, or a home cooked meal can also be gifts. These gifts can represent love.

People who enjoy Quality Time need time with their loved ones. This does not mean that you can sit with them, while focused on your phone. Nor is sitting on the same couch while absorbed in the football game. It involved active attention. People who feel love through Quality Time need shared activities and focused attention with those they love. They may enjoy having dinner together and spending the weekends together, or traveling with their loved ones.

People who desire Words of Affirmation appreciate praise, assurance and “I love you” spoken out loud. Hearing endearing words from their loved ones helps fill their internal “Love Tank” up with premium fuel. They never tire of hearing kind and thoughtful things. A simple, “Wow, you are amazing” or a “Thank you so much, I really appreciate the effort,” is the best way to make them feel loved.

Physical Touch is the Love Language for those who like to hold hands, hug, and cuddle. The tactile is what makes them feel loved. People with the Love Language of Physical Touch may enjoy greeting people with hugs, getting and giving foot rubs or snuggling on the couch.

Acts of Service is the Love Language that suits those who feel loved through being supported with practical help. Cooking a meal, helping a friend move, pitching in with errands and chores, these are all associated with the Love Language of Acts of Service.

Today I encourage you to think about how the idea of Love Languages might play into your life. The beautiful songs shared with us by the Sol Singers represent the 5 Love Languages. There is an insert in today's Order of Service that you will be able to use during the meditation to think about the ways in which you most appreciate receiving and prefer giving love. You may also take it home and follow the link to discover more information.

Sermon

According to Gary Chapman, each of us has a primary Love Language we use to demonstrate love and a primary Love Language that makes us feel loved. They are not necessarily the same languages. Some people may have just one language that means the most to them, while others can identify with multiple languages. When others use a Love Language with which we do not identify, we might not recognize the gesture as one of love, or even if we do, it may not feel like something that fills our “Love Tank.”

I gave birth to a person who feels love most when gifted with Physical Touch. She loves to be close, to hold hands, to sit on my lap, to have her hair stroked. I am not as physical a person as she is, so I really had to adapt when I became a parent.

In my family of origin we did not touch very much. Hugs, kisses and snuggling were not our style. Puzzles, games and intellectual discussion were more our norm.

So when I found myself with a child who never wanted to be put down, who could not get enough kisses, who loved to wrestle and tickle and who could sleep almost in an instant as long as I lay beside her while she drifted off, I had

to learn a whole new set of skills. I had to be mindful to be more physically affectionate. I had to remember to bask in her wanting to be with me all the time, instead of grouching about not having a moment to myself. I remember watching my friends and their children as they hit the tween years and suddenly found hugging or kissing their parents goodbye an embarrassing nightmare while my child smothered me with kisses as she headed off to her first homecoming dance. How could I possibly not appreciate this Love Language? Can you relate?

As a parent, I also had to learn to recognize when my child was demonstrating love. The Love Language with which she demonstrates love is Gifts. This was another language that I was not always able to recognize. I had to reframe the dandelion crown, the macaroni necklace, the times she brought me a “cool looking rock” she found outside.

These were a big deal to her. She was showing her affection for me, in this specific Love Language. Were I to brush them off, or quickly throw them away, she was devastated. Recognizing them for what they are strengthens our bond. Have you ever come across someone whose language is Gifts?

The Love Language I tend to crave is Quality Time: a wonderfully simple thing for a parent and a small child to share, but a little trickier with a teenager. As

my lovely teen runs off to be with her friends, spends time working at her job and begins looking at colleges, I need to adapt to less and less Quality Time. So I make sure to ask for what I need like checking in with each other to share our days, and occasionally a few hours spent chatting over a pot of tea. Does this ring true for others?

The Love Language in which I speak to my child is usually Acts of Service. When she was little it was breakfast in bed, a warm towel ready after a bath, and home cooked meals. Now it might be filling her car with gas. We have a saying in our home that, "Love is a clean kitty litter." These are demonstrations of my affection. Understanding and recognizing these things makes us both feel loved. Has someone spoken this language to you?

We had a moment during meditation to think about which of these Love Languages speak most to us. What makes you feel loved? What do you do to demonstrate your love? Are the people in your life aware of your preferences?

Lately, I have become enchanted with the idea of expanding this idea to other areas of life. It makes such sense in personal relationships, but can the idea be applied to the other aspects of life? Can it help me be a better pet owner? Can it make me a better co-worker? Would it help me be a better steward of the earth? Can it help in my spiritual life?

I believe it can.

During a recent service, Vance Bass shared a Jack Forbes' quotation, "All that we do, and are, is our religion." That rings true for me. I want to express my values, not just here on Sunday morning, but everywhere, everyday.

For example, I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. For me, treating people well is essential. All people. Does that mean I must love everyone? No. But it struck a chord last Sunday when Rev. Angela mentioned Matthew 7:12, otherwise referred to as the Golden Rule. It is usually paraphrased as, "Treat others, as you would want to be treated."

Actually, I have always had a problem with the Golden Rule. I think it should be tweaked to say, "Treat others as they would like to be treated."

This is where the Love Languages come in. While one person may love to hear Words of Affirmation, another may feel like talk is cheap, and actions speak louder than words. Where one person loves to be hugged, another may be very uncomfortable with that physical proximity. While I might gift a fabulous pair of unique, bright high-heeled shoes to a delighted Angela, Christine would be less moved.

Knowing how to treat others can only help us to create an atmosphere of respect and kindness. The wonderful people who work so hard on sound and video in the booth, may like to hear an occasional “Thank you, the entire service is enhanced for all these people due to your dedication, time and energy.”

However, what if they do not respond to that attempt to show appreciation? Could it be that their Language is not Words of Affirmation?

Maybe they would feel more valued through Physical Touch, like a hug or a Gift, like a note of thanks. These small, subtle differences may mean the difference between a person who feels content and appreciated, and a person who feels disgruntled and upset. Imagine the impact if we all made an effort to understand and speak the right “Languages” in our lives?

How about here at church? How can these Love Languages benefit the ways we come together as a congregation?

I unabashedly love this church.

This is a place where I find peace when life gets tumultuous. I find comfort when life wounds me. I find laughter and optimism in a climate of darkness

and despair. I find inspiration. I find challenge. I find community. Because I get so much from this place, I want to do better at demonstrating my love.

An obvious Love Language that I can speak at church is Gifts. I can offer my financial gifts. I can frame the upcoming Stewardship Campaign as an opportunity to demonstrate my affection for this place that gives me so much. I can give donations to the Animal Advocate's Yard Sale or the Social Justice Council's Fundraiser. I can bring food for the Food Pantry. I can bring clothes to the Clothing Exchange.

Quality Time is another one that is simple. I choose to attend services. I think we have all had that moment, when on a Sunday morning we are still tucked in our comfy warm beds and think to ourselves, "Maybe I will skip it today." I know I have had those moments.

However, I also know that when I make the effort to come- the human connections, the inspiring ministers, the music and so much more- always make me glad I came. Attending services truly is one place where I get more out than I put in.

When I do attend church, there is often a part of the service where we all come together to say Words of Affirmation. Rituals like our Affirmation help ground

us. They can be soothing and help create an important shared community bond.

I have already mentioned that the main way I demonstrate my love is through Acts of Service. This is my primary love language for demonstrating love. At church, it translates into choosing to volunteer. It is also one of the reasons I became Membership Director.

And I am not alone. We have a lot of volunteers in this church. You may not realize, but just to make today's services and Social Hour possible, there were more than 40 people involved: Changing the corner sign, opening the church, ushering, sound, video, projection, making coffee, bringing snacks, folding the Order of Service, teaching in Religious Education, picking up trash, being a lay leader, singing, working at the Welcome, Membership or Connection tables, bringing flowers...I could go on and on.

All this work. All these skills, talents, and time. Couldn't they really be speaking a Love Language? Can you feel all that energy that was spent to make sure that your "Love Tank" got some fuel this morning?

Do you have some love to share? Will you go home and reframe simple gestures like clean dishes, or a compliment? Can you identify the languages you speak, or that people are trying to speak to you? Will you consider

demonstrating your affection for this place through the Stewardship Campaign or by volunteering? Perhaps you can use Quality Time and participate in one of our dozens and dozens of activities, groups and committees?

Today you will have the chance to sign up for a plethora of activities at the Connections Table. Next week and September 11th you will be able to participate in our Connections Sundays, when you will have the opportunity to sign up for activities, groups and the many opportunities available here.

Gifts, Quality Time, Physical Touch, Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service. I choose to view them as Love Languages. Love Languages spoken to this community. To you. Do you feel the love?