

# Love Languages

## READING

### Love One Another

*I will be trying to love people in my church, but I will be saying “I love you” and some of them won’t understand it. They’ll just find me annoying*

This article is not so much about Biblical stuff, it’s based on a book by Gary Chapman called “Five Love Languages”. And I have added some clarifications and observations of my own.

This article is more of an “appendix” to the article [Love One Another](#).

In the Bible, we’re told to love one another. But how?

This isn’t just about romantic love, it’s about how do we do that as a church?

For each person in the church, how do we love them the way Yahweh wants us to?

The basic idea is that each of us has different things that make us feel loved. For me it might be physical affection like hugs, but for you it might be getting a compliment that you feel you deserve.

This becomes important in two ways.

Firstly, if I am a Words of Encouragement person, then I will react very badly to criticism. Essentially I will hear criticism as “I don’t love you”.

So I need to learn what my love language is so I know when I’m hearing wrong. When I’m reacting because of my love language and not rationally.

Then I need to learn not to react so much in those cases, and to realise that the other person is NOT telling me that they hate me, they are just criticising something.

This realisation can be life changing.

Secondly, I need to learn your love language. If, for example, your love language is Words of Encouragement, but mine is Physical Affection, and I try to show you love by giving you a hug. . . You will not understand what I am saying.

I will be saying “I love you” but you won’t understand it. You’ll just find me annoying.

(And of course, you’ll probably push me away, which I will take as “I hate you”, even though you only meant, “You’re annoying me”).

If your language is Words of Encouragement, and I want to show you love, I need to give you a compliment. It’s the only way.

Just like, if you speak English, but mine is Japanese, and I say 愛するよ。 You just won’t understand what I’m saying. I’ll think I’ve said and done all the right things, but you just won’t get the message.

It will be unsatisfying for both of us.

And this works for spouses. It works for parents showing love to their children. And amazingly it works for managers making their subordinates feel loved, (or at least valued).

But best of all, it works for churches showing love to one another...

So, what are these “love languages”?

### Receiving Gifts

Gifts people love gifts. Particularly gifts that show that you put some thought and effort into it. They want to know that you spent time thinking about them and what they like.

Don’t give gifts people a gift that is not wrapped, (even if it’s really expensive). Don’t give them a generic gift. And DON’T give them a gift voucher.

Don’t ever forget their birthday, or travel and not buy them at least something small that they will like.

You can recognize Gifts people by the gifts they give you. They will be nicely wrapped.

Possibly with hand made cards, or customised wrappings.

And the gifts they give you will have taken a lot of thought, and will usually match you really well.

They want to know that when you’re not together you still think about them. And that you understand them. You know what things they like and don’t like.

One of their downsides is that they expect you to have done the thing they wanted done even though they never asked you. It’s the same as the gifts, they want to know that you think about them, that you think about what they want, and so you buy an appropriate gift. You should have known that they wanted such and such done. The other person would usually have been happy to have done it if they had known. And often they might have done 4 loving things without having been “asked”, but they didn’t think of #5. So now the Gifts person is feeling unloved and often angry because of #5 wasn’t done and they completely miss the point that the other person did 4 things for them, out of love.

### Quality Time

Quality Time people want you to spend time with them doing the things that they are interested in.

Checking your email on your laptop while you watch a girlie movie with your wife is NOT quality time.

Leaving your laptop at the office so you can watch a girlie movie with your wife is great quality time, (as long as she likes girlie movies of course).

The issue is... are you focusing on me? Are we doing this thing that I love doing, together?

Don’t ever try to do two things at once while spending time with them. Don’t fall asleep during the movie.

It is really hard to recognise quality time people. If I am trying to work out someone’s love language, usually I arrive at QT by elimination.

Quality Time people usually have a hobby. Often one that they spend hours and hours doing, often by themselves, out in the shed, or in their sewing room, or in some special place. Sometimes with friends, like fishing, but almost just as happy doing it by themselves. Especially when they’re kids, they usually react badly if it’s time for them to stop what they’re doing and do what you want/need to be done.

### Acts of Service

Acts of Service people want you to do something for them. Actually, Acts of Service people usually want to do something for you.

They often really struggle with letting others do things for them. They will feel really valued and loved if they can do something for you that helps you a lot.

So, often the best you can do is help them do something for someone else. Sometimes, like if they’re moving house or something like that, then you can help them do it.

But even if they are really sick, they’re probably going to feel very uncomfortable with you doing something, (like cooking dinner), for them, (unless you’re married to them).

If your wife is an Acts of Service person you better keep a very short list of things that need fixing around the house.

Be careful when turning down their offer of help. Make sure they know that you love them and that you value their offer. Explain why you don’t need their help. (I don’t need a lift to the airport because my company will pay for a taxi).

You can recognise Acts of Service people very easily. They are the ones in the kitchen washing up after group dinners. They are the ones who always turn up for working bees.

They are the ones stacking the chairs.

One problem they have is that they are so busy helping everyone else that they never look after themselves. They are usually worn out, always way too busy. To the point that they often don’t do things because they just ran out of time. They really struggle to say “No, sorry I’m too busy”.

One way to help them with that, is to help them think long term. If you keep going like this, you won’t be able to help anyone in 10 years time, and we’ll have to be doing everything for you because you’ll be exhausted and sick. They way for you to be able to serve others long term, is to take some time for yourself now. Just a little.

When they see that the motivation for that is not laziness or self interest, they can often start saying no when they should.

### Physical Touch/Intimacy/Trust

Physical Touch people love being cuddled and hugged. They like having their hair played with. They like holding hands.

Actually, I think these people are actually more about intimacy and trust than physical touch. I think physical touch is just a common way of showing intimacy. If we feel close to people we let them touch us. So these people feel loved when you let them touch you. It shows that you trust them.

For example, from the people I know, I find that the people that Chapman calls Physical Touch also feel loved if they are included in secrets. If you confide in them. (And they can usually be trusted to keep those secrets too).

Or if you trust them with special authority or information that nobody else is allowed to know.

If it’s your spouse, then just touch their hair, or shoulder as you walk past them.

Physical Touch is very politically incorrect in many cultures these days, so you need to be very careful. But you will know. And try to share confidences with them instead. Open up about yourself.

What they are looking for is closeness and trust. They want to feel close to you. And that doesn’t have to be physical.

Be careful when pushing them away. It will be heard as “I hate you”. So make sure if you need to push, add an “I don’t hate you, but I need space right now”.

Physical Touch people also want to belong. They feel most hurt when they are excluded from something. Not invited, pushed away. Or when they just don’t feel like they fit in with the rest of the group for some reason.

Physical Touch people are usually very easy to recognise. They are usually “touchy feely” types.

### Words of Encouragement

Words of Encouragement people want compliments. We usually call them Compliments people. But they only want compliments if they think you are being genuine, and if they think they deserve it. So don’t over do it.

One thing they do not want is criticism. If you criticise them they will hear, “I hate you”, when all you said was “Yes, you’re right the pasta is a bit salty”.

If you need to criticise them over something, make sure you have built a good solid foundation first, and they KNOW that you love them. They must know it. Then you need to give them another compliment now. And then you can casually mention the criticism, and follow it up with another compliment. They will know what you are saying. If you do it this way, they will hear “I love you, but yes, you’re right the pasta was a little salty. But the dessert was one of the best ever”.

You don’t need to spell out the criticism as much as you would with other people. Keep it low key. They will exaggerate it in their own heads anyway.

Words of Encouragement people are very easy to recognise, (if you criticise them).

Also, particularly if they are not feeling loved in recent times, they can become very critical of everything and everyone.

They also often have a habit of telling you the same story many times. Or repeating the same criticism of something seemingly endlessly. Even when you’ve already said you agree.

Their main weakness is they never listen. When it’s your turn to talk they’re way too busy thinking about what they will say next to make you realise how smart they are. And if you come up with a new idea, you’ll have to just say it and wait, sometimes a few days before they’re willing to agree. Mostly because it wasn’t them who came up with it. And in the end, especially if they’re feeling unloved, they will say it was them who thought of it. Just live with it, let them think that.

So... which one are you?

What about your spouse?

What about the other people around you?

How is that going to change how you interact with them?