**“I LOVE YOU”**

***Love Language That Moves The World***

Have you ever read Gary Chapman’s book *The Five Love Languages*? I have read, and reread, this book a number of times. I even use it in my marriage counseling class, insisting that the couple study it separately and then take the test at the end of the study. They are often surprised to discover that their love language is quite different then what they thought. And, they are also amazed to learn that their future husband or wife’s love language is likely not at all what they thought it was. Do you know what yours is? Do you know what your fiancé’s, or your mate’s love language is? Don’t get too cocky and think you do. I learned my wife’s, and mine, the hard way.

Benita and I said “I do” on June 17, 1977. If you do the math correctly you will learn that we have been married 44 years and counting. During those years I had preached and written many times on I Peter 3:1-7 and Ephesians 5:22-33. They specify what a good marriage should look like. I wrote a column on the Home and Family for a published magazine for over a decade. You would think I would at least merit an A.A. degree on that topic. After all some actors get an Oscar for longevity in their craft called the Lifetime Achievement Award, right? But what have I received? Exactly what I deserve… a goose-egg!

After teaching and preaching on the love that a husband should have for his wife I shamefully discovered I didn’t even know my own wife’s love language. Peter had told me to “*dwell with your wife with understanding*” (I Pet. 3:7). While a newlywed on his honeymoon can be excused for his ignorance, a gray-haired man in his fourth decade of marriage should have figured that out. No excuses. For years I had been giving my sweetheart flowers, thinking all women’s love language is gifts. After all, doesn’t Hallmark, Hershey’s and Flowers.com tell us that cards, chocolates and flowers are the way to a woman’s heart? (Sidenote: I know jewelers tell us “diamonds are a girl’s best friend” but I’m not taking that bait, she’s still wearing that glistening $130 ring I got her 44 years ago! That should be good for life, right?).

Wouldn’t you assume, like me, that Benita must love gifts of flowers since she grows lots of them in her garden? If so, you too would be wrong. Those flowers she grows are free. Mine cost money. That is a waste to a woman who works hard to frugally balance the budget. I might as well have put those dollars on the grill and used them as kindling to cook our burgers. In other words, I was not speaking her love language. It was as if I was speaking pig-Latin to a French mademoiselle. What we have here is a failure to communicate. Houston, we have a problem.

*The Five Love Languages*, as given by Mr. Chapman, are (1) Words of Affirmation, (2) Quality Time, (3) Receiving Gifts, (4) Acts of Service, and (5) Physical Touch. Do you know yours? Do you know hers (or his)? If not, get busy and find out. It could change your relationship, and perhaps even save your marriage.

When Socrates first coined the phrase, “Man, know thyself,” he seemed to be insisting that we learn our own strengths and weaknesses before we try to solve the problems of others. Well, I didn’t know myself, or her. In marriage it is very important to “*dwell with your wife* (or husband) *according to knowledge*.” To achieve that will require lots of prayer, Bible study, book reading, conversations, and careful observation. Are you willing to do that? If so, you’re in for a 30, 60 or 100-fold return on investment.

Another great author I read is C. S. Lewis. He wrote a famous book called *The Four Loves*. He described the four Greek words for Love as: **(1) *Storge***: Affectionate, Supportive Love; (2) ***Phileo***: Friendship, Brotherly Love; (3) ***Eros***: Romantic, Erotic, Physical Love; (4) ***Agape***: Unconditional, Divine Love.

**Mr. Lewis had remained a bachelor for most of his life but at the age of 58 married Joy Davidman. She died of cancer four years later, leading him to write a powerful little book called *A Grief Observed*. In marriage he had made himself live out in real life the academic study he had written about in *The Four Loves*. Here is what he wrote:**

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.”

Yes, to say “I love you” is to make yourself vulnerable, whether it is love for my wife, for my mother, for my child, for my brother in Christ, or for a stranger I just met. When I say, “I love you,” it must reflect in some way a spark of divinity. I must attempt to show the meaning behind those three special words by bringing God into the equation. My wife was made in the image of God, and for me to tell her “I love you,” must go beyond the *Eros*, and the *Storge*, and the *Phileo* to ultimately express to her the heart of God – thus Agape. I must show her, in my own awkward, fumbling, bumbling way, a taste of eternity. I must show her “*God is love*” (I Jn. 4:8).

I have told my bride over these past 16,180 days “I love you” at least 50,000 times (that would be roughly 3 times per day, which I feel confident I have done, but you have my permission to ask her yourself). I have told my brethren verbally “I love you” many times (if I have not told you personally, please forgive me). I have told most everyone I have ever greeted “I love you” but have done so silently, and to myself, in hopes of improving that relationship. For that practice I thank my dad, who insisted I read Og Mandino’s book *The Greatest Salesman In The World*. In that book you are asked to read one scroll three times per day for 30 days. Scroll 2 is titled “I Will Greet This Day With Love In My Heart.” The greatest salesman becomes great by silently telling each person he meets, “I love you.” It changes the conversation, and the relationship. Believe me, it works. I’ve tried to practice it for nearly 50 years. My marriage, my parenting, and my life as an evangelist has been blessed by those three powerful words.

[Archimedes](https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/archimedes-quotes) said, “Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.” Well Arch, here is your lever and fulcrum in three words - “I Love You.” God said it, and showed it, and moved the world (John 3:16). Let us also say it, and show it, and thereby change the world … beginning at home.

I LOVE YOU. – Rick