

Speaking the Language of Love
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
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October 20, 2024

Text: Ephesians 5:21- 33

Purpose: Couples need to realize that in the marriage relationship, they are to mutually submit to one another. The heart of a good marriage is the ability to communicate love with one another. Gary Chapman in his book, “The Five Love Languages,” expounds on a positive way in which couples can learn to speak the language of love.

One evening, a bird-lover stood in his backyard and hooted like an owl -- and an owl called back to him! They had a whole "conversation."



He tried it again the next night, and the next -- and the owl always answered. He was fascinated.

Sometime later his wife had a chat with her next-door neighbor. "My husband spends his nights ... calling out to owls," she said.

"That's odd," the neighbor replied. "So does my husband."

Just then it dawned on them.¹



After Jesus was resurrected from the grave, and before He ascended back into heaven, He had a conversation with Peter on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Do you remember what Jesus asked Peter? “Do you love me?” Love, as many of us understand, can have a wide variety of meanings in the English language. We can love our children and we can love eating hotdogs. But I don’t think that word “love” means the same in those two different contexts.



In the Greek language, there are several different words for our one English word love. There is a Godly kind of love called “*agape*.” Then there is “*phileo*,” which is a brotherly kind of love. That is where the city of Philadelphia got its name from, “The City of Brotherly Love.” And then in the Greek, there is “*eros*,” or a sexual kind of love. Our English word, erotic comes from that Greek word. A fourth word is “*storge*” which is a parental type of love. “Jesus challenged Peter, as well as us, to love God with an “*agape*” kind of love. Today, we want to explore the topic of love in the midst of marriage.

Over the years, I have had many conversations with many people about the topic of submission in the context of marriage and love – especially the way it is used in Ephesians 5:22. “*Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*” I don’t think I have preached on this topic at Spilman since I have been here. So, pray for me as I dive deep into this water this morning.



Men, I must admit that I have heard many people use this passage of scripture in order to promote some sense of superiority over our wives. If we were sitting around talking with each other, I would agree this passage does say this, but it is in the context of men and women mutually submitting to each other. There are 3 verses in this passage of scripture addressing women while there are 9 verses directed at the men. Men, if we would simply learn to love our wives in the way that Christ loved the church and gave His life for it, then we would begin to learn to speak the language of love in our homes and families.

I once heard of a woman who woke her husband in the middle of the night, and said, "Henry, wake up. I just had this terrible nightmare. I dreamed I was at an auction for husbands. One husband sold for \$10,000 and others sold for millions of dollars."



That's all it took to get him awake. He asked, "Well, Honey, what were husbands like me bringing in?"

She said, "That's what was so disgusting. They were taking ones like you, tying them in a bundle, and selling the whole bunch for a dollar."²



The world has taken marriage and made it the butt of numerous jokes and turned it into a comedy. Television shows have not been very good models of marriage through the years. In the past we have witnessed the marriage antics in “I Love Lucy.” We remember how awful Archie Bunker treated Edith in “All in the Family.” We have also seen shows like “Good Times,”

“The Jefferson’s,” “The Cosby’s” or even the large family “Brady Bunch.” Today we have shows like “Reba,” “Full House,” and the strangely weird show, “Two and a Half Men.” The transformation of what a good family is through the eyes of the world has changed radically. For a few moments this morning, let’s see what God’s word has to say about the husband-and-wife relationship.

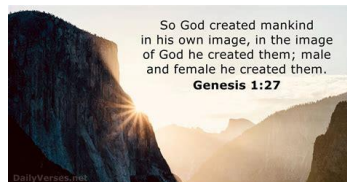
The text we read this morning is drawn from chapter five of the book of Ephesians. The Apostle Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus to give them practical ways of translating their faith in Christ into everyday actions. This passage deals with the relationship between a husband and a wife.



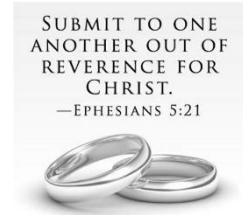
I must admit, that it is a dangerous thing for me to stand up here and discuss this matter with you. There are parts of Paul’s writings that suggest that a man is to reign and rule over his wife. If you

have come to hear that message this morning, then you will be sadly disappointed.

There are some pastors, deacons, teachers, churches, and seminaries that insist that the role of women in ministry is relegated to a supporting role for the men. I have come to believe that there are few limitations in ministry between men and women. In Genesis 1:27 it says that “*God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*”



I have come to accept that a woman can and should take leadership roles when God is leading that person. If God has called this person, then God will equip that person, and that person will accomplish what the Sender intended. If it is from God, it will succeed, if it is not from God it will fail. So, who am I to stand in the way of God’s plan if He calls a woman to a place to minister.



I guess I did veer off the passage of our text for today. Yet in another way, I have given you the platform in which I want to expound upon today’s text. The text in which we read today begins at Ephesians 5:21. If you look at the prior verse, you will actually see the connecting thread of what Paul is teaching. It says,

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
(Ephesians 5:21)

Most of us stumble over the words of Ephesians 5:22, “*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*” because we’re concentrating on what’s fair. But if we insist on playing out our marriage that way, we only bring pain to our spouses and ourselves. To paraphrase Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, “If you insist on an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, you’ll both end up blind and toothless.” God wants to spare us that pain, so he gives us a better way: “Submit to one another.”³

This verse (5:21) is the key that unlocks the next twelve verses. If the husband and wife will love and give reverence to Christ, then they can submit to one another. As Christ is the head of their lives, then they are able to love, nurture, care for, do for, each other.

A Word to Wives

“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”



Many ministers have taken this passage and molded women in their congregations as submissive, passive, participants, while the men ruled the day. This passage is simple giving a structure in which a family can operate and work smoothly. This passage can only work properly if the men in the family truly love their wives as Christ love the church. If men fail to love in a Christ-like kind of love, then the men will gravitate to words like, “submit” and “husband is the head” and “submit in everything.”



Both men and women need to come into the relationship with Christ as the head. It is not a matter of power or authority between a man and a woman; it is paramount that Christ be the head of each person.

The basketball player, Mark Price once said, “Marriage isn't going to fulfill you. Only a relationship with Christ will. When you come to that realization, it can free you to really love your spouse.”⁴

We need to get this concept firmly fixed in our mind. Until we have Christ as our head, we will flounder in almost every relationship we have in life. Those three verses of

scripture addressed to the women are followed up by nine verses directly aimed at men.

A Word to the Husbands

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. “



“In this same way, husband's ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- for we are members of his body.”



“For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

“This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.”

Do you understand what Paul is trying to tell us? Men, you need to love your wives with the same passion, forgiveness, and care; which Christ demonstrated for the church. Keep in mind, Jesus DIED to redeem the church! Husbands love your wives.

Many a young man has entered marriage thinking that he would rule the roost, but got a rude awakening much later. If you are not aware of what is happening in our country today, for every ten marriages – four will end in divorce. If it is a second marriage, 60 percent will end in divorce. If you marry a third time, 75 percent of those marriages will end in divorce.



From all that I have read concerning marriage, it seems that communication (or the lack of communication) is the critical component in marriage. Today, we have e-mail, fax machines, cell phones with texting capabilities, and answering machines. Yet, it seems that all of us have difficulty in communicating.



Gary Chapman's book, *"The Five Love Languages,"* is one of the best-written books on the topic of communicating heartfelt commitment to your mate. Gary Chapman begins by telling us that both men and women need to have their "love tank" filled before they are able to give of themselves. It is hard to give when there is nothing in the love tank to draw from.

The premise of Gary's book is that we communicate love in five different ways. Each person is unique and we need to determine what language they speak.

Let me give you an example. Let us say that you speak French and I speak German. I could tell you all day in German that I love you and because you don't understand the language, you would not understand it. And at the same

time, you may be telling me that you love me in French. You could be saying, "I love you" in many different ways in French, but because I only understand German, I am not receiving the intended message.

And when we get married, we want to communicate love to our mate. We want to say, "I love you." Gary has identified five different ways that we do that.

I. Affirmation

The first way to communicate love is through WORDS OF AFFIRMATION.



I know I appreciate encouraging words. They build me up, they help me go the second mile when I am tired. Words like;

- "That outfit looks good on you."
- "You did a great job on that project."
- "That was a wonderful meal."
- "Great job!"

Even kindergarten students get reinforcement for their good behavior. If you have done good all day in school and listened well, followed instructions, were nice to others, then at the end of the day, the teacher may draw a smiley face on your thumb and say, "Thumbs up!" or give you a smiley face sticker.

Ogden Nash once wrote,

To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong admit it,
Whenever you're right, shut up.⁵

II. Acts of Service

The second way to communicate love is through ACTS OF SERVICE.



We all like to be pampered at times. We want others to do something for us. We can show that we care for others by doing for them. It should be noted that what we do for each other before marriage is no indicator of what we will do after marriage. Acts like;

- “Ironing a shirt”
- “Cleaning up the dishes.”
- “Cooking a special meal.”
- “Changing the oil in the car.”
- “Keeping their car filled with gas.”

Anything that shows you care -- Something special.

III. Physical Touch

The third way to communicate love is through PHYSICAL TOUCH.



Some people respond to hugging, holding hands, sitting close together, touching one another. Many children respond in this manner. They need a hug, or touch to show them you care. Many adults respond in a similar manner. We need to recognize this is a way of communicating that we care. Physical touch can make or break a relationship.

I guess I should point out that there are also inappropriate ways in which touch can be destructive. Acts of aggression, however minor can become a barrier to effective communion. Those types of touch will communicate hate instead of love.

IV. Quality Time

A fourth way to communicate love is to spend QUALITY TIME.



A central aspect of quality time is togetherness. I do not mean proximity. Togetherness has to do with focused attention. One of my family’s pet peeves is when I pick up a newspaper and begin reading, or pick up my cell phone and start scrolling, or get absorbed in my laptop, or work on a sudoku puzzle instead of listening to them. I can tell by the look on their face that it is time for me to put down my distraction and give them my full attention.

Many men are trained to analyze problems and create solutions. We forget that marriage is a relationship, not a project to be completed or a problem to solve. Here are a few keys to becoming a better listener.

- Maintain eye contact when your spouse is talking.
- Don’t listen to your spouse and do something else at the same time.
- Listen to the feelings.
- Observe body language.
- Refuse to interrupt.

One way to learn new patterns is to establish a daily sharing time in which each of you will talk about some of the things that has happened to you that day and how you feel about them. Did you know that husbands and wives that pray together AND attend church together, have a divorce rate of one in a thousand? Take the time to listen to one another and cultivate your relationship.

V. Gifts

The last way to communicate love is to GIVE GIFTS.

If your spouse's primary love language is receiving gifts, you can become proficient gift giver. In fact, it is one of the easiest love languages to learn.

Physical presence in the time of crisis is the most powerful gift you can give if your spouse's primary love language is receiving gifts.

You may be sitting here saying, I am not married and this message doesn't apply to me. Well, the truth is – it applies to every relationship we have. We can take this concept and learn to identify the language of love for those around us and then begin learning that language.



In what way do you regularly express love to your spouse? Your method of expressing love may be an indication of what would also make you feel loved.



When the Pharisees came to Jesus and asked him, “What is the greatest commandment?” he replied, “*Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. The second is like unto that, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” Loving your spouse or family is fulfilling the second part of the Greatest Commandment.

Martin Luther once said, “Of course, the Christian should love his wife. He is supposed to love his neighbor, and since his wife is his nearest neighbor, she should be his deepest love.”⁶

To love another person is a deliberate choice. Meeting our spouses need for love is a choice we make each day. If you know their primary love language and choose to speak it, then their deepest emotional need will be met and they will feel secure in your love. This not only applies to our spouses, it also applies to friends, neighbors, children, and parents.

Love is a choice. The world tells us that love is a feeling or an emotion. I believe love is a choice. Love does not seek wrong. It rejoices in goodness. It seeks what is best for the other person.

Learning to speak another's language is one of the keys to effective communication.



The first step in communicating with others is to identify your own love language. Here are three simple questions that may clue you into what your love language may be.

What does your spouse do or fail to do that hurts you most deeply? The opposite of what hurts you most is probably your love language.

What have you most often requested of your spouse? The thing you have most often requested is likely the thing that would make you feel most loved.

Love and Respect

A final word from Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus,



“However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

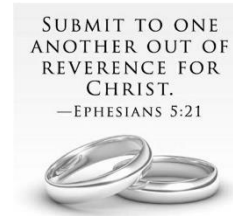
The power of this one verse can transform a marriage if it is truly grasped. Men are commanded to love their wives. Demonstrate it – show it – speak it – communicate it – give it. Love your wives.

But does this same command apply to women as they relate to their husbands? No. Wives, you are instructed to “respect” your husband. One of the most destructive things a woman can do in her home is to disrespect her husband. You all know what that looks like – a woman who runs her husband in the ground among her friends, with her family, with the children. She does not give him any respect. If a wife would respect him – and tell him that she respects him – he will respond back to her with love.

But if he senses and feels disrespected, denigrated, defeated, dragged through the mud – then do you think he will respond to her in love? No. He will begin to withdraw, and this fuels the cycle of disrespect. Soon their marriage is in shambles and both are headed to their lawyers.

Paul's one sentence advice, if heeded by couples, could transform their marriage. Husbands love your wives. Wives, respect your husbands.

Families also need to learn to do this with each other. Love one another.



Paul's use of the relationship between Christ and the church is a powerful metaphor which demonstrates of the kind of sacrifice that is needed in a marriage. Men, remember Christ willingly gave his life for the church. You need to go above and beyond what is called for in marriage. Women, remember the sacrifice Christ gave to redeem sinners. You should respond with the same kind of compassion and respect towards your husband. Both men and women need to respond to each other in mutual submission to each other. If we could only learn to speak the language of love to our spouses, children, friends, and family, we could walk in unity with one another.

May God give us homes where we demonstrate Christ-like love for each other.

LET US PRAY

NOTES:

- ¹ Mickey's Funnies, An Owl Funny, June 11, 2019, forwarded by Gretchen Patti
- ² Parson's Technology -- R. Larry Moyer, "Right Smack in the Middle of Sin," Preaching Today, Tape No. 148.
- ³ Parson's Technology -- Kevin A. Miller, an editor in suburban Chicago. Men of Integrity, Vol. 1, no. 1.
- ⁴ Parsons Technology - Basketball player Mark Price, Marriage Partnership, Vol. 9, no. 4.
- ⁵ Ogden Nash, Marriage Partnership, Vol. 6, no. 1.[Parson's Technology]
- ⁶ Parson's Technology -- Martin Luther. "Martin Luther--The Later Years and Legacy," Christian History, Issue 39.