

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
July 21, 2019
The Rev. Jamie Samilio
Church of the Holy Cross

Love Languages

All things have been created through, and for God. God is before all things, and in God all things hold together. God, is continually creating, and we, God's creations are continually in a state of transition, growing, changing, and adapting to our world. Building strong, supportive relationships will help us adapt to change. If we get our relationships right, then following Jesus' command to love each other as He loved us, becomes a natural part of our lives. We need to build healthy relationships with our spouses, children, family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and those in our world who, while distant from us are still connected to us, as we are called to respect the dignity of all people.

The thing about relationships is that entering into a relationship is not where the work ends, it is in fact where it begins. Relationships are not check boxes, the kind where you take a marker and just check this off on a to do list. 1. Make friends; 2. Get boyfriend/girlfriend; 3. Meet neighbors; 4. Get married; 5. Join church; 6. Have kids; 7. Engage with co-workers; 8. Join social club; and so on. You have to work at each of these relationships, and that requires communication. In 1995 Dr. Gary Chapman wrote a book called "*The Five Love Languages*," and it has recently become popular again. While these 5 languages were initially written to help couples better communicate, Chapman has also adapted his work to include communication between children and parents, families, and recently, workplaces—perhaps churches. On a personal note, I in my wisdom thought it would be a good idea to have (my wife) Sylvia and I listen to this book on relationships while in a car together on a 6-hour ride—this strategy is not for the faint of heart. I recommend the book.

Good communication means that we need to understand the language each of us is speaking, if we are to be effective in strengthening our relationships. Understanding and decoding the 5 Love Languages will help take the guesswork out of our relationship expectations and needs. According to Chapman, the five Love Languages are: Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, and Physical Touch.

1. **Words of Affirmation:** Positive affirmations, acknowledgement of work well done and compliments can be the most effective in building a relationship with the person who has words of affirmation as their primary love language.
2. **Acts of Service:** "Actions speak louder than words" for people who express love through this Love Language. Cooking a meal, doing the laundry, and stopping at the store are all acts of service, done with positivity, and the happiness of others in mind.
3. **Receiving Gifts:** This Love Language is not necessarily materialistic, it is anything that makes some feel supported, valued, and loved. This is different than Acts of Service – those are purely helpful and take work off someone else's plate.
4. **Quality Time:** Undivided attention is what people who speak this Love Language want more than anything. They do not just want to be included during this period of time, they want dedicated time together without distractions, and this helps them feel comfortable in the relationship.

5. **Physical Touch:** To people with this Love Language, nothing is more impactful than the physical touch of other people. A hug, holding hands in prayer, or a reassuring hand on a shoulder best connects them to others.

Learning your own primary Love Language, and the language of people you are in relationship with will help create a stronger, more supportive bonds. We need strong bonds, especially in times of transition as together, we navigate change.

Now, what has all of this to do with the Gospel? What do you suppose were the primary Love Languages of Martha and Mary? Martha, like the good Samaritan from last week share service as their primary Love Language. Martha shows love through cooking, cleaning, washing, and other acts of hospitality—"acts" being the operative word. Martha gets upset when she sees Mary with Jesus, because through her eyes, Mary is not showing the same level of love she is because she is not helping with the chores at hand. On top of that, Martha sees Mary as violating a social contract, and is not living up to Martha's cultural expectations. Mary's primary Love Language is different than Martha's. What Love Language do you think Mary speaks? Quality Time! In Mary's mind, spending quality time with Jesus is the most important thing she can imagine doing in the moment. She is giving and receiving undivided attention, and this means the world to her. Jesus even says, *"Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."*

Jesus knows He is only here for a little while, and experiences, time spent with Jesus, are valuable beyond one meal, or act of service. But, we need to be careful in rebuking Martha. Like the good Samaritan, Martha's primary way of showing love is through Acts of Service. If our view of faith does not include acts of service, we may end up living into a faith were no one ever does anything for anyone—no feeding the hungry, clothing or housing the poor, etc., and God calls us to take action.

The Good Samaritan and our Gospel today need to be understood together. Jesus often breaks cultural rules and constraints, showing love and care for people first and foremost. The Samaritan and Mary are breaking cultural norms, and in doing so they are examples of the Kingdom Jesus is bringing. We need to hear God's word and do it. God calls all of us to use our gifts for the good of the Kingdom. Our temptation is to look at others and judge as Martha did, how the actions of others are not up to cultural expectations. Be careful, because judgment dismisses the unique gifts each of us brings. And, if we think about it, judging others usually happens because we do not understand, or communicate effectively with each other. We speak different Love Languages, but we are one people and we need each other. As theologian and author Howard Thurman said, *"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."* What makes you come alive? Answer that and then answer the call of Jesus. Come alive to the call of Jesus.

What does this mean for our church, especially in a time of transition? We can build stronger relationships if we recognize the Love Languages we speak in ministry, and appreciate how our gifts, taken together, create the welcoming atmosphere we experience at Holy Cross. Once that happens, we can become fluent in Love Languages and engage with each other more deeply in ministry—and that is what the Kingdom is all about.

What are the primary Love Languages of our ministries? Remember Chapman's five languages are: Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, and Physical Touch. Welcoming and Fellowship say affirming words that make people feel welcome and comfortable. Outreach, Altar guild, choir and others share their gifts through acts of service. Stewardship is all about receiving gifts of time, talent, and treasure—cash is of course a favorite with them. The

Pastoral Care Ministry is all about spending quality time with people, and even though they remember people with gifts of cards, and say encouraging words, their primary gift is that of presence and quality time. Those who seek healing, will surely receive physical touch in the laying on of hands. We also greet each other in worship by shaking hands or exchanging hugs as signs of peace. We are all healed through our worship.

Learning our own Love Language, and appreciating the languages of others will help us to strengthen our relationships with each other, and with God. We need each other in this ever-changing world. We need each other, as we embrace the changes that are a natural part of our lives together here at Holy Cross. Do not be afraid, but live into the wonder of what God is calling you and all of us to do. We are not alone, we have each other. Amen

<https://cratedwithlove.com/blog/five-love-languages-and-what-they-mean/>

<https://www.workingpreacher.org>

The Five Love Languages, Dr. Gary Chapman