

THE MISSIONAL MARRIAGE STUDY

Session #5: Understanding One Another

Conceptual Ideas to Convey:

- ❖ Men & Women, by nature, tend to communicate differently. Spouses are no exception to that rule!
- ❖ Most husbands and wives tend to give and receive (i.e. – communicate) love in one or more of 5 emotive languages.
- ❖ It's essential that we be willing to learn our spouse's primary love language if we are to be effective communicator's of love.
- ❖ By seeking to understand one another better, we'll then be able to serve one another better.
- ❖ And just as it is with any missionary team, when we're able to effectively communicate love to one another, we'll be more empowered as a team to effectively communicate God's love to the world around us!

The Importance of Keeping the Love Tank Full:

Both secularists and Christians agree that the need to feel loved is a human's most primary emotional need. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13, even said that the best human accomplishments, if not motivated by love, are empty and worthless. God indeed, has pre-wired us to need the love of another. (Gen 1-2; 1 John 4:16). So in a sense, every one of us has an emotional tank that needs to be filled, first and foremost by God- but also by our mates that He has given us.

Many of the cravings or even frustrations within our marriage can often stem from an "empty love tank." It doesn't matter how good things are going in your life- if your spouse ain't happy, then ain't nothin' good! As dangerous as it is to try and drive your car for long distances on an empty gas tank- it's even more dangerous to try and sustain your marriage when your spouses' emotional love tank is on empty. Therefore it's essential that we not only learn to discern when our mate's love tank is running low, but how it is that we go about re-fueling it!

The Five Love Languages:

- ❖ **Words of Affirmation** – written or verbal comments, compliments, or expressions that show appreciation or encouragement

i.e. – saying "I love you" or "You're beautiful" or "You did good at this..." or "I'm proud of you." Taking time to verbalize how you feel about another. This may also be reinforcing a difficult decision, affirming progress, validating their ideas, etc... This can also be done in the form of cards, notes, letters, e-mails, etc... The more detailed and expressive the affirmation, the more it means.
- ❖ **Quality Time** – undivided, intentional time logged together where deep levels of intimacy and vulnerability can be shared

i.e. – spending one on one "face time", where deep conversation can take place. It's sharing experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires on a deep level, in an uninterrupted context. This can be in the midst of doing something together or just being together- but spending intentional bonding time is the primary focus. This can range from a candlelit dinner, a picnic in the park, walks together, devotional time, etc...
- ❖ **Gift Giving** – expensive or inexpensive material items given as symbols of one's thought and care for another

i.e. – bringing home flowers, candy, tickets to the game, jewelry, or any other material item that would mean something to the other person and show them you remembered them. This is typically seen in remembering birthdays, anniversaries, or other special occasions- but is especially significant when the gift comes for no other reason at all, than just to say "I thought of you and wanted you to have this..." The key to gift-giving is not always the gift itself, but the thought and timing behind it.

❖ **Acts of Service** – tangible projects done to meet the physical needs of another

i.e. – mowing the lawn, washing the dishes, putting the kids down, taking out the trash, running errands, taking care of needs in the house, planning out an activity, taking care of the budget, etc... - all in an attempt to alleviate a burden of another or make their environment more comfortable. This means when you initiate the act without having to be asked.

❖ **Physical Touch** – sexual or non-sexual ways of showing affection

i.e. – holding hands, putting your arm around the other, spending “play” time together, giving a massage, kiss on the cheek, etc. It’s some sort of physical contact that helps to bring security and closeness to the relationship. Physical touch can often reinforce stability in times of crisis and in many ways, can communicate to the other far more than words can.

Additional Points to Consider:

- ❖ Just as with any verbal language, there are also many dialects within the language itself (i.e. – creative ways in which to express that language)
- ❖ This will also apply to how you teach and love your children (i.e. – Proverbs 22:6)

Questions to Consider:

- ❖ Why is good communication important in a marriage?
- ❖ What happens when there is a breakdown in that communication?
- ❖ Why is “emotional communication” such a powerful tool in a marriage?
- ❖ Which of the love languages most likely defines how it is you receive love? (i.e. – what minister’s to you most?)
- ❖ Which of the love languages do you most naturally tend to give to people? (i.e. – how do you typically minister to others?)
- ❖ How has God loved you in each of these ways?
- ❖ How can learning about these love languages apply to the way we love our neighbors? (i.e. – why is it important for you and your spouse to collectively learn how the people around you receive love?)

Homework:

The assignment for this week is three-fold...

1. If you don’t already clearly understand your spouse’s primary love language, take some time this week to sit down with your spouse and talk about it. Ask one another what ways minister to them the most- and how it is you can do a better job of serving him/her better.
2. Understanding what primary way(s) your spouse receives love; seek out intentional ways this week to speak to your spouse in that language. Each day this week, find some small way to make deposits into your spouse’s love tank.
3. Sometime in the next two weeks, plan a date around your spouse’s primary love language. If you and your spouse give and receive love in the same way, then plan one mutual date together. If you and your spouse communicate in different ways, then there’s going to be two dates... One for the wife to plan out around her husband’s love language(s), and one for the husband to plan out around his wife’s love language(s). This is your chance to be creative with one another and pay special attention to one another’s emotional needs. (*Note... this doesn’t have to be expensive, just creative!) Have fun!!!

*****Bonus Assignment:**

Both you and your spouse know someone around you who is far from God. Maybe it’s a neighbor, a friend, a co-worker, a family member, etc... Sit down with your spouse and determine what ways that person (or persons) might be uniquely wired to receive love. Then plan out a creative way to minister to that person so that you can show them the love of God better! (i.e. – give them a gift, serve them, spend time with them, encourage them, go play with them, etc...)