

Series: “Single. Married.” (Part 2)
“Mars and Venus: What Women Wish Men Knew About Women”

This is the second in a series of messages entitled “Single. Married.” We’re dealing with relationships, what it means to be male, female. One of the points I made last week is that there are deeply rooted differences between men and women. I want to talk especially to the men in today’s message: “What Women Wish Men Knew About Women”.

In 1992, Dr. John Gray wrote a book with a catchy title that became very popular. It was called *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. The book highlights some of the fundamental differences in how men and women function and view life. For example, a man’s *sense of self* is defined through his ability to achieve results; a woman’s *sense of self* is defined through her feelings and the quality of her relationships. As far as *motivation*, men are motivated when they feel needed; women are motivated when they feel cherished. With *communication*, men communicate to convey facts and information. Men need to have a reason to talk. Women communicate to express feelings. They talk for the sake of sharing.

The author says problems and conflicts in relationships come when couples fail to grasp these basic differences. But when men and women understand and accept these differences, they are more able to give and receive love.

Perhaps an even more useful way of describing how people give and receive love differently is found in a bestselling book written by Dr. Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*. Dr. Chapman says that while the need to feel loved is a primary human need, what makes one person feel loved is not necessarily what makes another person feel loved. Often, difficulties arise in marriage when spouses speak a different love language.

The five love languages he lists are: 1. Words of Affirmation (verbal compliments, encouraging words, kind words, humble words); 2. Quality of Time (quality conversation, quality activities); 3. Receiving Gifts (not only on special days, but little unexpected gifts for no occasion); 4. Acts of Service (like helping around the house); 5. Physical Touch (holding hands, hugging).

Chapman claims that everybody has an “emotional tank” that needs to be filled with love. But if a couple are to keep each other’s “emotional tank” full, they have to learn what each other’s primary love language is, and express their love in ways that are meaningful to the partner. So, if the primary way love is communicated to me is “physical touch”, but my partner’s customary way of showing love is giving gifts, I’m not going to feel loved, and my emotional tank will be empty.

A similar idea to the “emotional tank” is a metaphor suggested by Willard Harley

and others. It's called a "Love Bank". This might be a helpful image for us men. Think of woman's heart and needs as a *bank account*. Every time I show love in ways that meet the woman's needs, a deposit is made in the bank. Every time she gives out love, there is a withdrawal from the bank account. The goal here is *to maintain a balance in the account!*

When a couple are *dating*, the guy usually makes regular deposits and keeps the bank pretty full. He may open the car door for her, send little love notes, even though there's no special occasion...*k-chung!* There are long telephone conversations, with no trouble finding things to talk about...*k-chung!* He tells her how beautiful she is, how kind and thoughtful...*k-chung, k-chung, k-chung!* Then there is that moment when he tries to find the most romantic way to present that little box from the jeweler...*K-CHUNG!!!* (He just made a hefty deposit in the love bank). Then comes the wedding day and the honeymoon, and even though they may be stressful, there is another giant *k-chung* in the love bank!

But after the honeymoon we get back to the routine of our jobs and adjust to married life. You find out that the person you married is not all you thought – you bicker over little things, you don't see eye to eye on money, or in-laws, perhaps children come along and suck up your time. And all the nice things that used to happen when you were dating taper off. Instead of flowers, you get criticism. Instead of long talks, he wants to sit and watch football or racing. So, there are a lot of withdrawals from the love bank, but not many deposits. One day, you get an overdraft notice! She slams the door or bangs pots and pans. You say, "Honey, what's the matter?" "Nothing!" But the overdrafts continue. You know what happens if the overdrafts don't stop. The account is closed. And if you keep on making withdrawals and accumulate massive debt, there is a feeling of hopelessness. The only thing left to do is to file for bankruptcy, and start over. We call that *divorce!*

The thing about the "love bank" too is that *her bank* seems to need a different kind of currency! *You think* you're showing love, but it doesn't register. You put deposits in the bank, but it's like trying to deposit Italian lire in the account. You want to put your arm around her, but she seems cold. You thought she'd love getting that new mixer for her birthday, but she wound up locking herself in the bedroom, crying! We men tend to use different currency in trying to make deposits in the love bank.

So, in the words of Gary Chapman, how can we learn to speak the same "love language"? What does it take to make a woman feel loved? Well, we can look at the "experts" – counselors and writers in the field. They have worthwhile things to say. *But let's take a look at the women who responded to a questionnaire that I distributed in several churches different churches.*

I asked: What do you want or need most from your husband? Wives responded:

- “To be there physically and emotionally”
- “To be there for me”
- “Closeness – understanding – compassion”
- “Respect, love, trust”
- “Comfort, support, honesty, sensitivity”
- “Emotional, spiritual support”
- “Love, encouragement, communication.”
- “Understanding of each other. To be my best friend that we share all of our joys and sorrows”
- “Companionship. Someone to share life with (the ups and downs)

A number of women responded by using the word “*support*” – support “in raising the children”, “support for the day to day handling of life”. Women seemed to be saying they want someone to lean on and rely on. High on the list of things women want most were “*companionship, friendship*” – someone to share life with, someone to be your best friend.

Affection was deemed important - wanting the husband to be close physically and emotionally, perhaps hugging, cuddling. One lady in the other survey said she wants those intimate expressions of affection *not just as a way of getting what comes later*” (if you know what she means). One person said: “a loving look or hug without feeling there are strings attached”. Note that not one lady in any of the surveys said she wants “the other thing” most!

The question also was asked in the survey: When do you feel closest to your spouse? Here are some of the ladies’ responses:

- “When we understand one another”
- “When we pray”
- “When we do things together”
- “When we are doing things together that we both enjoy”
- “In time of trouble”
- “6:00 in the morning when he kisses me goodbye and then calls me at 9:00 to see if I remember what he said”
- “When we lay down at night to go to sleep. We talk and relax together.”

In some of responses, a feeling of wistfulness or sadness came through. One lady wrote, “I do not feel close to my spouse anymore.”

When you look at these, aren't these wives saying they feel closest to their husband when they have his full attention – praying together, doing things together, sharing life experiences with each other? In terms of Gary Chapman's love languages, this would be "Quality of Time" – quality conversation, quality activities together.

Men, deposits are not made in our wives' love banks if we're talking to them when we're reading the newspaper or watching TV! Imagine what might happen if our wife seems to want to talk, and in the middle of watching a big game or our favorite show on TV, we turn the TV off, and really *listen* to her! If we're sincere about it, this could be a huge deposit in her love bank! This is a tough one! If the Flyers are in sudden death overtime, or the Phillies are in a tight extra inning ballgame, it's really hard to turn my attention away from that and focus on my wife.

Guys, women want us men to tell them about our lives. To open up, and be vulnerable. That's hard for many of us guys, because we weren't taught that way growing up. We learned that we have to be tough. Don't show your feelings, or you might be a sissy.

We're looking at what women want and need from us men. **I asked single women in the questionnaire: What 5 qualities do you look for the most in a prospective mate?** Here are some of the responses:

"Humor, honesty,, faith, compassion, open mind."

"Humor, morals/values, compassion for life, love of family, financially wise, (it doesn't hurt if they're tall)"

"Kindness, understanding, intelligence, compassion for others, tolerance, loyalty"

"Christian, loyal, good sense of humor, good hygiene, friendly."

"Caring, kindness, honesty, sharing, spend time together"

"Trustworthy, good communicator, responsible, fun to be with, slow to anger"

"Pretty intelligent, hard worker, also independent, fairly handsome, stable in many areas, go-getter, fun, sense of humor, etc."

"A Christian, sense of humor, loving and caring toward others, like interests, mutual attraction"

Note here, there were only a few references to *physical attractiveness*, but there was a lot of emphasis on *spiritual qualities, personality and character traits* that you would want in a man.

One of the things mentioned here was being a Christian. Many women are looking for men who can provide *spiritual leadership* and have a *devotion to Christ*.

I've spent some time in this message looking at what *women* have to say about how

we men can bless them and help meet their needs. **But what does GOD say about how husbands are to love their wives?** Ephesians 5:25 in the Bible says, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her.” Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church! How did Christ show His love for the church? *He loved her with a love that gives itself up for the other without calculating the cost or asking anything in return.*

The New Testament has a term for this kind of love. It is the Greek word “agape”. Agape is more than a warm, fuzzy *feeling*. It is an *act of the will, a choice*

In the early stage of a romantic relationship – dating, courtship – the love we have for our partner is rooted in *feelings*. We have this giddy feeling, a feeling of euphoria. A lot of it is based on *what this person does for me*. This woman turns me on and arouses me sexually. She makes me feel like a man! This guy makes me feel special, makes me feel important.

But over the long haul in marriage, we don’t always have warm and fuzzy feelings for our mate, do we? But we are to love our wives with a Christlike “agape” love – *choosing* to stand by our wife, care for our wife, in an unselfish way – when the warm feelings are there, and when the warm feelings are *not there*...when it’s that time of the month and she’s *so* moody...when he's only half listening to you and seems oblivious to your feelings...when she's so wrapped up with the kids that you feel ignored...when he refuses to pick up his clothes or oil the squeaky door.

Jesus expressed His love for the church in terms of service: “The Son of man came not be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Men: God put you into your wife’s life to bless her and serve her, to help meet her needs in a sacrificial way. To love her as you love yourself. Look at what it says in Ephesians 5:28-29: “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, people never hated their own bodies, but they feed and care for them, just as Christ does the church.”

Ladies, if your husband loved you as Christ loves the church, do you think your needs would be met? Your need for attention, affirmation and recognition? Your need for a companion and friend? Your need for support? For love and affection? Your need for a spiritual partner? I like what Adam Hamilton says, “My wife has needs of the heart, and I don’t want any other man to fulfill those needs.” Men, there can be no higher goal to strive for than to love your wife as Christ loved and loves the Church!

But men have a love bank too that needs to be filled. In the next message I want to look at the topic: “What Men Wish Women Knew About Men.”

