GOD SPEAKS YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE

How to Enhance Your Relationship with God

GUIDE FOR GROUP STUDY

For more information or to discover your love language, visit ***www.5LoveLanguages.com.***

The following suggestions are to help facilitate a group discussion of each chapter's content. Group members should always be encouraged to share answers, but never forced to.

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES

1. Share stories with other group members about times when you encountered language difficulties or problems communicating with someone else. Describe the situation and the feelings experienced. (Was the lack of communication comic? Sad? Dangerous? Worth the effort?)

Then discuss the opposite extreme—a time when you and another person were really connecting with one another. How does it feel to realize someone fully understands not only your words, but also the thoughts and feelings behind them?

2. Discuss: ***What do you suspect is your primary love language: words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, acts of service, or physical touch? On a scale of 1 (least) to 10 (most), how certain are you?*** If group members know each other fairly well, let them provide input for one another at this point to verify or challenge a person's response. Explain that later chapters will provide much additional information to confirm or possibly change these early opinions.

3. Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 13—the "love chapter" of the Bible. The passage should be familiar to most group members. But as they hear it this time, have them listen in terms of their designated love languages. For example, how would this classic description of love pertain to words of affirmation, the giving of gifts, physical touch, and so forth?

Notes:

4. Ask members to share any questions they have at this early stage, and have a volunteer record their responses. As you go through the rest of the book, look for sections that address the questions on your list.

5. You might also consider how each participant might use his or her love language for the benefit of the group in future meetings. For example, someone who prefers words of affirmation might be more willing to pray; those who speak the language of gifts might prepare (or at least organize) refreshments; those who respond to quality time might host the meetings and encourage members to stay afterward for a while; etc.

Notes:

CHAPTER TWO

LOVE LANGUAGE #1: WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

1. Begin by having group members describe a time when someone's words meant a great deal to them. It might be helpful to have each person think of at least two examples: once long ago that had a lasting effect on their lives, and another that has occurred just recently.

2. Have group members share some of their favorite promises from the Bible. If they are slow getting started, have volunteers look up and read these that were included in the chapter:

PSALM 119:103-105
PSALM 119:111
PSALM 119:114
PSALM 119:162-165
ISAIAH 41:10
JEREMIAH 29:11
JEREMIAH 31:3
JEREMIAH 31:13
JOHN 5:24
JOHN 6:35
JOHN 6:40
JOHN 10:27-30
REVELATION 22:12-13
REVELATION 22:17

Discuss: ***Some people would consider these verses "just words." What is it about them that provides the sense of affirmation for you?***

3. Give group members the opportunity to practice this love language among one another as you verbally affirm each person present. If you are still relative strangers, you might not be ready to do so. But if you know one another, begin with one person and let others affirm what it is about that person that they appreciate. Then move to the next person and on around the group. When finished, discuss how it felt to have so much focused attention and affirmation.

Notes:

4. Close with a sentence prayer, giving everyone the opportunity to express short statements of affirmation to God. [See King David's examples on page 44].

NOTE: In preparation for the next meeting, you might want to ask volunteers to do a little research on the four people mentioned toward the end of Chapter 3: David Brainard, E. M. Bounds, Charles Finney, and Praying John Hyde. These will be unfamiliar names to many people, yet their examples of quality time with God have inspired countless others.

Notes:

CHAPTER THREE

LOVE LANGUAGE #2: QUALITY TIME

1. Discuss: ***Why did you decide to participate in this group?*** After each person responds, see how many expressed, in one form or another, the desire to spend quality time with others. Some were most likely drawn by the topic, but others may have been equally attracted to the format. For example, someone may respond that he or she was personally invited by another member, yet may not consciously realize that accepting the invitation was for the opportunity of spending quality time with that person.

2. If you opted to have volunteers research David Brainard, E. M. Bounds, Charles Finney, and Praying John Hyde, have them give their reports at this point. Be sure to include how spending quality time with God affected the life and ministry of each person. If you didn't choose to do so, spend time discussing the life of George Mueller described in the chapter: ***What did you think of his devotion to prayer and quality time with God? Do you think his commitment to God and his work with the orphanages were interrelated? Why or why not?***

3. ***Ask: What people do you know personally who appear to demonstrate quality time as a primary love language? How does it affect their relationship with God? How does it influence their relationships with other people?***

Notes:

4. Have volunteers look up the following passages (all mentioned in the chapter) and discuss what you might learn and apply from each one about quality time with God:

- Abraham and God (Genesis 18)
- Jesus and His disciples (Mark 4:30–41)
- Jesus, Mary, and Martha (Luke 10:38–42)

5. Close by spending a little quality time with God as a group. Let all who are willing express themselves to God in a way that is comfortable for them. (Although the focus is on quality time, those with the gift of touch might give hugs to other members, those with words of affirmation might pray or sing, and so forth.)

Notes:

CHAPTER FOUR

LOVE LANGUAGE #3: GIFTS

1. Discuss: ***Who is someone whose generosity and gift-giving you admire and would go out of your way to meet, given the opportunity?***

2. Explain that people have different opinions about how much to expect from God, and let members describe their personal beliefs about God as a giver. For example:

- *Are success and wealth proof of God's blessing?*
- *Does God give to each person equally? (If not, why not?)*
- *If we don't use the gifts God gives us, are we in danger of losing them?*

After participants express their opinions, discuss the concept of God's gifts as a love language. While people may disagree on some aspects of His gifts, few can argue that God gives to people out of love, and is pleased when they then give to one another.

Notes:

3. Spend a little time discussing spiritual gifts. First have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 and point out, as was noted in chapter 4, that every believer in Christ has been given distinct abilities to perform certain tasks in the church. Lists of spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; and Ephesians 4:11-13.

If this is a new topic for group members, you may want to provide additional resources (or save the discussion until there is more time available). But if they are familiar with spiritual gifts, let them share what they believe their gifts are and how they use each gift for the good of the church. And if they know one another well, encourage them to identify perceived spiritual gifts in one another.

4. Have volunteers read Luke 21:1-2 and Matthew 10:42. Explain that two pennies or a cup of cold water may seem like insignificant gifts, yet all heartfelt gifts are noticed (and rewarded) by Jesus. Then discuss other gifts that may seem small, yet could meet very real needs in your church and community. Perhaps your discussion will lead to suggestions for your group members to give to an established charitable organization where their gifts will express God's love to others in their immediate vicinity. If they tend to think of projects they might do to help others as a group, you might postpone the discussion until the next chapter and undertake it as an act of service.

Notes:

CHAPTER FIVE

LOVE LANGUAGE #4: ACTS OF SERVICE

1. Have each person share a time (or times) when someone performed an act of service for him or her that had a dramatic and lasting effect.

2. Encourage participants to describe acts of service they have done for other people. Try to get a variety of examples: seemingly small actions that had much larger results than expected, times when much effort went into an act of service with very little response from the recipient, acts that were anonymous or went completely unnoticed, etc. Discuss: ***Even though our acts of service get different results, do you think God evaluates us based on those results? Explain that God is pleased when His people show genuine love for others through service, regardless of how the recipients respond.***

Notes:

3. Have a volunteer read Exodus 17:8-13. Discuss:

- ***Which of the participants named do you think was primarily responsible for the Israelites victory over the Amalekites?*** (Moses was certainly a key figure. Joshua was leading the army. Yet Aaron and Hur were equally essential, despite the seemingly insignificant roles they played.)
- ***Which of the characters do you most relate to? Why?***
- ***Do you think most people are willing to perform mundane service, or do they show more respect to those like Moses and Joshua? Why? Do you think those in the church do any better than the general population at recognizing everyones contributions?***

4. It can be a little intimidating to cite Mother Teresa as a model for acts of service. Yet she became known throughout the world for seeing a need that no one else was addressing and working consistently to meet that need as an act of service to God. Can your group members identify similarly neglected needs in your church? Neighborhood? City? Are there things your group members would be willing to do as acts of service to meet some of the needs they identify?

Notes:

CHAPTER SIX

LOVE LANGUAGE #5: PHYSICAL TOUCH

1. Ask group members to determine how comfortable they are with physical touch in each of the following settings. Have them respond with a rating from 1 (least comfortable) to 10 (most comfortable).

- Kisses, hugs, and such among immediate family members
- A hug from a casual acquaintance of the same gender in a public place
- A hug from a casual acquaintance of the opposite gender in a public place
- Holding hands of strangers while singing in church
- The unexpected hand of a homeless person on their shoulder at a city park
- The embrace of an elderly person while visiting a nursing facility

As participants respond, encourage them to be honest and nonjudgmental of others because there are numerous valid reasons why someone may not be comfortable with physical touch. And they are likely to discover a variance in tolerance levels of physical touch.

2. Discuss: ***What examples can you recall from the chapter of physical touch in the ministry of Jesus? Why do you think the Bible says so much about Jesus' propensity to touch others?***
(He gladly held little children, washed His disciples' feet, touched lepers and others while healing them, etc. He taught much about love, but physical touch was one tangible way to not only make that kind of love more real for those He met, but also as a model for others to follow.)

Notes:

3. Have a volunteer read Luke 8:40-48. Discuss:

- ***In the midst of a pressing crowd, how did Jesus know one particular individual had intentionally touched Him?***
- ***What made the touch of the woman different from that of all the other people who were touching Jesus?***
- ***Jesus was on His way to see a very sick girl (who would be dead bu the time He arrived). What do we learn about Him from His willingness to stop and seek out one particular person before moving on?***

4. Have volunteers share times in their lives when they felt most like God was touching them. Then ask them to think of ways that they might attempt to "touch" God. Without the physical presence of Jesus, how might that be possible? (When Jesus returned to the Father, He promised to send a replacement. Believers have access to God and can feel His presence through His Holy Spirit. The Spirit also intercedes for believers by "translating" their innermost feelings and presenting them to God the Father [Romans 8:26-27]. In that sense, God is always within reach.)

5. Close with some kind of physical touch that is comfortable for everyone present (holding hands to pray, hugging one another, etc.). As you do, thank God as a group for this love language (and all the previous ones as well).

Notes:

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCOVERING YOUR PRIMARY LOVE LANGUAGE

1. Ask group members to recall what they cited as their primary love language during the first meeting (chapter 1). Discuss:

- Has anyone come to a different conclusion during the past several sessions? If so, has that made a difference in how you relate to other people or God?

2. Have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 17:4-11, 32-40. The David vs. Goliath story will probably be familiar to most, so focus on David's choice of attire. Discuss:

- ***Do you think David was naïve or unaware of theseverity of the challenge before him? (If not, why did he agree to fight when no one else would?)***
- ***What practical steps did King Saul take to protect David?***
- ***Why did David decline Saul's offer?***
- ***What was the ultimate result? (See 1 Samuel 17:41–54 if necessary.)***
- ***How might this story relate to love languages?***

Point out that it would have made perfect sense for most people to wear all the protective gear possible before facing such an opponent. David was willing to give it a try, but it wasn't right for him. Similarly, one person's love language may appear to be the right approach, but other people have different (and equally valid) alternatives.

Notes:

3. Have your group members spend the bulk of their time discussing the three questions provided in the chapter, first in regard to one another, and then in regard to God.

- ***How do I most often express love to other people (or God)?***
- ***What do I complain about most often?***
- ***What do I request most often?***

4. Ask group members to explain how an increased awareness of their love languages has affected the two areas mentioned in the chapter: (1) Their level of self-understanding; and (2) Their ability to understand and help fellow believers. Encourage a variety of stories as examples.

5. Close with a prayer, thanking God for any positive improvements so far and asking Him to let those changes be just the beginning of an ongoing closer bond with Him and with other people.

Notes:

CHAPTER EIGHT

LEARNING TO SPEAK NEW DIALECTS OF LOVE

1. Have group members describe a time or times when they found themselves in a situation where they were completely out of their element (meeting new in-laws, work situations, attending new churches, vacationing, etc.). What made them feel out of place? How did they respond? Did they learn anything positive from the experience?

2. Have a volunteer read Luke 10:1-12, 16-17. Explain that the passage describes an assignment Jesus gave to a group of His followers. Most (if not all) would have been familiar and comfortable with the Jewish rites and rituals, so their mission was a rather challenging one. Discuss:

- ***How would you like to have been among this group? Why? How do you think hyou would have handled this assignment?***
- ***What would have been your hopes? Your biggest challenge?***
- ***How well would you have handled living with strangers? How would you have responded to being rejected?***
- ***How do you think your final response would compare to that of the disciples (v. 17)?***

Notes:

3. Summarize: ***This was a lengthy chapter with a number of specific ideas involving all five love languages.*** Ask: ***Did any of the suggestions sound intriguing to you?*** Let participants answer and explain why.

4. Discuss: ***After we discover our primary love language, why does it matter whether or not we "speak" other languages as well, or add different "dialects"?*** Someone should recall the chapter's challenge to keep worship from becoming ritual. What starts out as authentic can become mundane if we aren't careful. Perhaps group members could provide specific examples from their own experience.

5. Challenge each person to experiment this week by attempting to use: (1) A love language other than their primary one; and (2) A different dialect of their own love language. For example, if they tend to worship privately, they might attempt more corporate worship this week. They might vary a time or location. They might move from religious to secular settings, or vice versa. Be sure to give them permission to fail. (Many people tend to avoid attempting new things due to fear of failure.) Close with prayer, asking God to direct each person to new and different opportunities to speak languages of love this week. And be sure to schedule time at the next meeting for their reports.

Notes:

CHAPTER NINE

GETTING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

1. Follow up with the challenge from last week. Did anyone experiment with a new love language, or a different dialect of his or her primary love language? If so, what were the results?

2. Discuss times when members of the group stepped out of their comfort zones, whether socially, professionally, or spiritually. How did that act of boldness pay off? What did they learn about others and about themselves in the process?

3. Ask group members how God also delights to see us seeking to love and know Him in new ways. For someone whose love language is Words of Affirmation, what is something they might learn about God and His character by loving Him through Quality Time? Or through Acts of Service? What might the benefits of stepping out of the comfort zones in our spiritual lives be? How might deepen their relationship with God?

Notes:

4. Have a volunteer read Matthew 25:31–40, the passage Karen referenced in her story in chapter 9. Discuss:

- ***What do we learn about Jesus' heart for the needy and vulnerable in this passage?***
- ***How are we to respond to Jesus' compassion for others? (See also Matthew 9:35–38.)***
- ***What does it mean for us that our Lord identifies Himself with "the least of these"? (v. 40)***
- ***How does reflecting on Jesus' character and example in His earthly ministry compel us to see and love others?***

5. At the end of Chapter 9, Dr. Chapman says that he believes God often "brings challenges into our lives because He wants to keep our love relationship vital and growing. He does not want us to simply go through the motions of religious rituals." We are convicted or challenged as our knowledge of God grows and therefore understand ourselves and our need for God more. During this time, have the group reflect on how conviction can be a powerful means of renewal and lead to a deeper experience of God's love.

Notes:

CHAPTER TEN

WHATEVER THE LANGUAGE, LET LOVE PREVAIL (AND EPILOGUE)

1. Ask volunteers to recount a time in their lives when "love prevailed." (Accounts may include unusual friendships, times when love changed their plans, motivation to take a strong stand against a wrong, etc.) After several stories have been shared, consider to what extent the five love languages may have been involved (words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, acts of service, or physical touch). Also discuss to what extent those loving moments reflected the love of God.

2. Discuss:

- ***Have you ever encountered a so-called "lover of God" who didn't display genuine love? What was the situation? What was your response to the person?***
- ***How do you respond to the thought that God's love is unconditional? How does that consideration influence your daily life?***
- ***How do you respond to the thought that God's love is everlasting? How does that consideration influence your daily life?***

Notes:

3. Have a volunteer read 1 John 4:7-21. Discuss:

- ***Is anything in this passage new to you, or do you see any of these truths in a new light after completing this book?***
- ***How important is love in your relationship with God? With other people?***
- ***What do you think John meant when he wrote, "God is love" (v. 16)?***
- ***What do you think he meant by, "Love is made complete among us" (v. 17)?***
- ***How is love supposed to connect our worship to our daily lives (vv. 20–21)?***

4. If you recall (or if you kept) the questions your participants had at the end of the first session, restate them here and see if they have been answered. If not, work as a group to determine the best way to find the answers.

5. Save time for a review of the book as a whole. In this final review, be sure to include: ***(1) How does God speak your primary love language; and (2) How do you reflect that love to others?***

Notes:

THE 5 LOVE LANGUAGES®

PREMIUM ASSESSMENT

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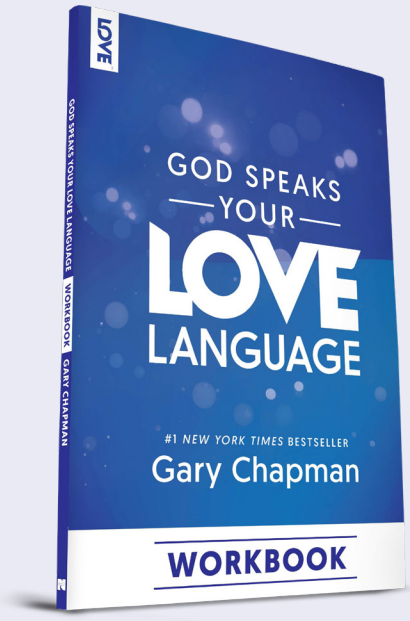
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