

Fil-Am Community Church

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Key Verse: Matthew 25:21

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Good morning! Love is in the air. The air is cold, I know, but the God's love should warm our hearts today, especially for our loved ones, our wives, specifically. Why don't you turn to your spouse and say, "Happy Valentine's Day! I love You!" Say it like you really mean it. There you go. You just said those words that will introduce us to the first love language which is the first part of our series on "Let Me Count the Ways". Our theme verse is from 1 John 4:7-9. Why don't we read together, *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."*

The first message in series is called "Words of Affirmation" which is what I'm going to share this morning. Now, this series is based on Gary Chapman's book, "The 5 Love Languages". It was #1 in the New York Times Bestseller List when it came out. It has helped thousands and thousands of couples re-discover romance and practical love in their marriage. We want you to benefit from this as well. So, we're making the book available to each couple. Because we love you, we're going to share the cost with you. You see, this is a partnership, a give-and-take partnership. The book costs \$15.99 in bookstores. But we'll pass this on to you for only \$5. That's more than 50% discount because we love you. I hope you also love your spouse enough to make an investment in your relationship. What if you're not married? We also have a book for you, "The 5 Love Languages for Singles". We love our singles, too. What if you have little children? We also have "The 5 Love Languages for Little Children". Each book you get for the same price. Please look for Arnel and Pastor Dave after the service and you can get a copy from them. Now, that it's out of the way, let's talk about our series.

Although this series is based on the book, our messages will focus not only on how to best love our wives or husbands but also on how to express our love to others by applying the

principles of the book. The book, of course, is biblical and we want the message series to be biblical as well and so, we're going to cite instances in the life of Jesus. Jesus is the best person we can imitate with regards to applying the 5 love languages principle. Jesus is the epitome of love. Loving like Jesus loves is what we want to accomplish in our lives as Christians.

First what does Chapman mean by the 5 Love Languages? In his book, he says, "There are five emotional languages – five ways that people speak and understand emotional love." He teaches that each person has a love language by which they are able to feel that they are really loved. If you can communicate to them in their own love language, then they can feel the love that you want to express. In contrast, if you're trying to express love but not communicating in the other person's love language, then it could lead to frustration and even to a relationship breakdown.

So, the key is to know your love language and know your partner's love language. At the back of this book, you will find two sets of questionnaires that you and your spouse can answer to discover your love languages. They may be the same, they may be different. It doesn't matter. You have to know so that you can have a more fulfilling and satisfying love relationship. You can also go to 5lovelanguages.com to do the same exercise. This morning, I'm going to share with you the first of these 5 love languages, "Words of Affirmation". BTW, these are ways to love and be loved. And so, the 5 Love Languages are not in order of importance. They are not steps to love. They are ways to love.

Let us read this verse, *"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"* (Matthew 25:21)

This verse comes from the story of Jesus called "The Parable of the Talents". The master is affirming his servant. You see, affirmation or declaring the worth of a person through a verbal compliment is one of the best things we could ever give someone. Affirmation, like knowledge, stays with the person especially if given sincerely. It is not fleeting, it cannot be taken away from you, it doesn't rot or rust. Right now, I can still remember the words my former boss told me years ago, after completing a project, "Good job, Rolly!" and I still feel good about it. I'm sure you could also remember some affirming words you received in the past. Like "You look good!", "You look nice in that dress", "You made a good presentation", "You look slim", "You

have a very beautiful voice”. Didn’t those words make you feel good at the time? So, it’ll be nice to receive it once in a while.

Mark Twain once said, “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” So, that’s six in a year. I think that’s true. Everyone needs a good compliment to keep on going. Even children do. Like the little boy who asked his dad to play darts with him. He said, “Dad, I want you to stand over here and watch me hit the bull’s eye. Every time I miss, you say, “Good try!” Every time I hit the target, say, “Great job!”

We are all desperate for attention and affirmation. We want to receive compliments, praises, acclamations. In short, we are all looking for love. Chapman teaches that the reason is that each of us has inside of us what he terms an Emotional Love Tank. When you were born, you have an emotional love tank. And this tank gets filled with love through the different ways that love is given you. It may be a kind word, a hug or embrace, an enjoyable playing time with your parent, a wonderful gift you received at Christmas, or someone giving you a ride. Then, Chapman quotes the words of Dr. Ross Campbell, a psychiatrist who specialized in the treatment of children and adolescents, “Inside every child is an ‘emotional tank’ waiting to be filled with love. When a child really feels loved, he will develop normally, but when the love tank is empty, the child will misbehave. Much of the misbehavior of children is motivated by the cravings of an empty ‘love tank’.” So, loving your spouse or another person means realizing that they have their own emotional love tanks. It means being conscious that we can be used by God to fill their love tanks. A person whose love tank is full is full of love and is a whole and stable person.

Words of Affirmation is the first language of love. To be able to speak this language effectively to your spouse or to just any person you know, you must observe three helpful guidelines. The first guideline is this:

1. I MUST STRIVE TO SPEAK ENCOURAGING WORDS ALWAYS

To encourage is to put courage in, to help someone to be brave and strong inside. All of us have areas in which we feel insecure. We lack courage, and that lack of courage often hinders us from accomplishing the things that we want to do.

The New Testament tells us that when Jesus Christ resurrected, he showed himself to his disciples who were gathered in a house. Thomas, however, wasn’t with them. And when the disciples told him they had seen Jesus, he didn’t believe them. He doubted. He said he would believe only if he could touch himself the nail marks in the hands of Jesus. A week later, Jesus

came back to the house and this time Thomas was there. Knowing that Thomas doubted, Jesus told him, *“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”* (John 20:27)

Those were the encouraging words of Jesus to doubting Thomas. He knew that the faith of Thomas just like the other disciples had begun to sag.

They had hoped for a Messiah who would save them and instead he thought that he left them alone. Jesus came at the precise time that Thomas was there to show him his glory. He asked Thomas to draw near to him and touch him. He wanted to instill faith and courage in Thomas' heart once again. That's why he says, *“Thomas, stop doubting and start believing.”* Thomas did and according to oral tradition, Thomas became an evangelist and traveled as far as India. He is considered to be the patron saint of India.

In Chapman's book, he tells the story of Allison who had always wanted to write. Her interest in writing grew when she was in her later years in college but her major was in history actually and it was too late for her to change majors. Then, she got married and before her first baby, she wrote several articles and submitted one to a magazine, but promptly got a rejection slip. She never tried to submit one again. Until her husband discovered an article she wrote and told her, *“I just finished reading your article. Allison, you're a really good writer. This stuff ought to be published! You write clearly. You have to submit this to some magazines.”* Encouraged, Allison decided to submit her article to some magazines. Her article was eventually published. Many years later, she is an accomplished writer and all because of the encouraging words from her husband.

This is how it should be between husband and wife. Encouraging one another, supporting each other. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, *“Encourage one another and build each other up.”* Remember, you made a vow on your wedding day that you would love and cherish each other, till death do you part. God is the witness to that vow and, therefore, you must strive to make your marriage work. And the first step is to communicate words of love to your mate.

Unfortunately, communication between husband and wife becomes less and less as years go by after the wedding. Someone observed that in the first year of marriage, the man speaks and the woman listens.

In the second year, the woman speaks and the man listens. In the third year, they both speak and the neighbors listen. Communication lines must always be open and the best way to

achieve that is by always giving words of encouragement. When you do so, you encourage your mate to respond the same way. It's a give and take.

Giving encouraging words means being careful about the words that come out of our mouths. Ephesians 4:29 says *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs."* Are my words building up? Do my words make my wife, my husband, my boss, my co-worker, my friend, feel valued? Words can build or they can tear down. Words can build a marriage relationship or tear down a marriage relationship. Words can build a child's self-esteem or tear down a child's self-esteem. When Thomas Edison was a little boy, he was not attentive in class. He was always daydreaming. As a result, he didn't fare well in class. One time, his teacher caught him daydreaming and scolded him. Then his teacher sent him home to his mother with the note: "Too stupid to learn." He went back home crying and told his mom what happened. His mom then wiped the tears from his eyes and with a soft, gentle voice said, "I believe in you. You're special. You can achieve a lot of things because you're the greatest in the world for me." Those heartening and fateful words pushed him to greatness. As we know, Edison invented the electric bulb, the phonograph and thousands of other useful devices.

Do your words encourage or discourage? Do they lift up other people, or do they let them down?

I must strive to speak encouraging words always. The second is,

2. I MUST MAKE AN EFFORT TO SPEAK KIND WORDS ALWAYS

The Bible says that love is kind and, therefore, if we are to communicate love verbally, we must use kind words.

It means expressing our feelings or thoughts or desires in a gentle and loving tone. This has to do with the way we speak. If I said, "OK, I'll take out the garbage right now!" By the tone of my voice, you could conclude I was angry and sarcastic. But if I said, "OK, I'll take out the garbage right now," you know that I love doing it. I was expressing love through my words. I love my wife enough to take out the garbage without grumbling and complaining.

Jesus always expressed his love to others by his kind words. He didn't condemn, he didn't criticize unnecessarily, he didn't make another person feel uncomfortable. One night, a woman was brought to him by the Pharisees. They accused her of adultery and were ready to throw stones at her. But Jesus stopped them and said that anyone who didn't sin must cast the

first stone. One by one they left. Then Jesus asked the woman, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one sir,” she said. And Jesus said, “*Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.*” (John 8:11)

Jesus was very careful with his words. He spoke words of kindness to the woman although the woman was caught in sin. In fact, you could detect a tone of compassion and kindness in Jesus’ words.

In a marriage relationship, kind words must always prevail to keep the marriage strong. We know that quarrels are inevitable in a marriage – small quarrels, big quarrels. But quarrels that are not handled properly has the potential of causing a rupture in the relationship. For example, when there’s an argument and the wife is screaming and shouting, it’ll be best for the man to not meet fire with fire. Control his temper. The Bible says, “A gentle answer turns away wrath.” (Proverbs 15:1a). It is best to keep quiet and let the storm pass, so to speak.

I remember one time, about a couple of years ago, my wife was serving dinner and she was kind of irritated at me about something, maybe I didn’t take out the garbage, and she was being historical, you know, bringing up my past mistakes, and I got irritated too, but instead of clashing with her, especially in front of our kids, I decided to get my car key, got inside my car and drove away. I didn’t know where I was going. Maybe watch a movie to cool off. But I remembered I was hungry and so I drove to KFC which was about a mile from home. I told myself I’ll go to the movie after a good KFC meal. But, when I reached behind my back for my wallet, I realized it wasn’t there. My goodness, I don’t have money and I don’t have a driver license too. Now, I could end up in jail hungry. Anyway, I desperately looked for some loose change in my car. I was fortunate to find enough to buy me a piece of chicken. Afterwards, I had no choice but to go home and, of course, I drove carefully.

The lights in our house were already out when I got home. I went straight to Eze’s room where I tried to get some sleep. But I couldn’t get sleep. Finally, I was able to sleep. But I dreamt. I don’t remember it exactly, but I dreamt of my wife. And I woke up. I had a nightmare. Just kidding. When I woke up, I felt like the Lord was saying, “Go to your wife.” I hesitated but the Holy Spirit’s prodding was strong and finally, I got off the bed and went to our bedroom. As I expected, she was lying on the bed but wasn’t asleep. In the end, we sorted things out.

The point is, it could have been worse if I engaged in a war of words with her. Instead, I walked away which I assumed stopped her from bickering and gave me some time to cool off.

But God was still in control. He made sure I go back home right away after cooling off. The next day, I watched the movie alone. That's a joke. Don't tell my wife.

So as not to hurt anyone, deliver kind words. As the Bible says, speak the truth in love. And remember, speak the truth always. Tell the truth. You see, one way of surely destroying any relationship or another person is when we engage in gossip. Untruth and unkind words are the twin axes of evil in a gossip.

In ancient Greece, Socrates was reputed to be held in high esteem because of his knowledge. One day an acquaintance met the great philosopher and said, "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"

"Hold on a minute," Socrates replied. "Before telling me anything I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Triple Filter Test."

"Triple filter?"

"That's right," Socrates continued. "Before you talk to me about my friend, it might be a good idea to take a moment and filter what you're going to say. That's why I call it the triple filter test. The first filter is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and..."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second filter, the filter of Goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him, but you're not certain it's true. You may still pass the test though, because there's one filter left: the filter of Usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my friend going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither true nor good nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

This is why Socrates was a great philosopher & held in such high esteem. Friends, use this triple filter test each time you hear loose talk about any of your friends. Someone said, "We teach little by what we say; we teach more by what we do; we teach most by what we are."

Paul says in Colossians 3:8, “But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” And also in Colossians 4:6, he says, “Let your conversation be always full of grace.”

I must strive to speak encouraging words always. I must make an effort to say kind words always. And the third is,

3. I MUST BE CONSCIOUS IN USING HUMBLE WORDS ALWAYS.

We’re talking here about making requests, not demands. Loving your mate is being humble enough to know that they are not your servant. They are your co-equal partners in family-building. To be sure, each of them has a role to play, the husband as the leader and provider, the wife, as the one who supports the leader and primarily looks after the children. And yet, they are partners in building the family. As partners, they don’t control each other. Thus, no one can make demands of another. Instead, you express your desire to your mate in the form of a request. So, between these two, which is an expression of love by the husband:

- a) Could you make that good pasta one of these nights?
- b) Can’t we have a decent meal around here?

The first one, right? In the first one, the husband is affirming the wife’s value and at the same time tells her that this is the way to build intimacy with him. In the second one, the husband is being whiny and making a demand, and most likely, he would get a response like, “Okay, you cook!”

The apostle John narrates a story when Jesus was on his way to Galilee and had to pass through Samaria. It was a hot sunny day, and when he reached Sychar, he sat down by the well. The Bible says, “When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (John 4:7) Jesus made a request and there’s a purpose for that request. He wanted to build a relationship with that woman so he could point her to the correct way to worship God.

Jesus loved that woman and he wanted to save her and use her to save others. In the same way, making a request instead of a demand shows others we care for them, we respect them and we value them. A wife who says to her husband, “Do you think it will be possible for you to clean the gutters this weekend?” is expressing love by making a request. But the wife who says, “If you don’t get those gutters cleaned out soon, they are going to fall off the house” has ceased to love and has become a domineering spouse.

When you make a request of your spouse, you are affirming his or her worth and abilities. You are in essence indicating that she has something or can do something that is meaningful and worthwhile to you. When, however, you make demands, you have become not a lover but a tyrant. And this is true of any relationship, the more humble you are, the more people will gravitate towards you. But the more demanding you are, the more people will stay away from you.

In conclusion, I'm going to share three of Dr. Chapman's suggestions, and there are eight of them, on how to put this particular love language into action. Keep in mind that these suggestions are written primarily for practice among couples; however, they can be applied to all interpersonal relationships:

1. Set a goal to give your spouse a different compliment each day for one month. If 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away,' then maybe a compliment a day will keep the counselor away". For other people, try to pay a compliment to a friend, peer, coworker, or church member each time you see them.

2. Look for your spouse's strengths and tell her how much you appreciate those strengths. Be specific. "I like how you reach out to people at church who don't seem to have anyone to talk to." At work, you can say to a co-worker, "I appreciate the time you spent with me in teaching me how to create a spreadsheet in Excel."

3. Occasionally email or text a note of affirmation during the day or when one of you is traveling. Or if you know your spouse is having a hard day, send a link to a funny web site. You can do the same to others by sending an encouraging text or emailing them, especially to those who are struggling.

Folks, we just started our journey towards creating loving and healthy relationships. Note that the outline says "I must strive, I must make an effort, I must be conscious". I'm aware that for many of us, it doesn't come naturally. We have to ease ourselves into this kind of attitude and behavior gradually. With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is possible. After all, God wants us to be like Jesus. Becoming like Jesus is developing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I hope you'll keep this teachings in mind this week. And I encourage you to get a copy of the book. Also, be thinking of Jesus. Jesus is our model when it comes to loving others. He showed us ultimate love when he died for you and for me.

