



THE ONE YEAR®

LOVE
LANGUAGE

— MINUTE —

Devotional

GARY CHAPMAN



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DEVOTIONAL**



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The One Year Love Language Minute Devotional

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Edited by Kathryn S. Olson

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INTRODUCTION

I'VE BEEN PRIVILEGED to counsel couples for more than thirty years, and in that time I've seen my share of marital struggles. But what I've also seen, time and time again, is the power of God to transform relationships. When two people commit to each other—and especially when they commit to communicating love to each other through the five love languages—positive change occurs.

Because my background is in marriage counseling, I tend to use the language of marriage when I write. Some of the issues I address are marriage specific. However, if you're a dating or engaged couple, I hope you will read this book too. There is plenty of helpful information for you as well. The building blocks of marriage—such as good communication, respect, unconditional love, and forgiveness—are foundational to any romantic relationship. And learning to identify and speak your loved one's love language will benefit a couple at any stage.

You can use this devotional individually, or sit down together as a couple to read it each day. Use the prayer at the end of each devotion as a starting point for your own prayer—whether you pray silently together or aloud, one at a time. In just a minute or two every day, you can discover encouraging biblical insights.

Whether your relationship is strong or struggling, stable or challenging, my prayer is that this devotional will encourage you and give you renewed joy in each other. May your relationship be strengthened this year as you focus on loving and growing together.

Gary Chapman

COMMUNICATING LOVE



Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love. Let love be your highest goal! 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13–14:1

AFTER THIRTY YEARS of counseling couples, I'm convinced there are five different ways we speak and understand emotional love—five love languages. Each of us has a primary love language; one of the five speaks to us more profoundly than the other four.

Seldom do a husband and wife have the same love language. We tend to speak our own language, and as a result, we completely miss each other. Oh, we're sincere. We're even expressing love, but we're not connecting emotionally.

Sound familiar? Love doesn't need to diminish over time. The end of the famous "love chapter" of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, says that love is of great value and will last forever. In fact, the apostle Paul says that love should be our highest goal. But if you're going to keep love alive, you need to learn a new language. That takes discipline and practice—but the reward is a lasting, deeply committed relationship.

Lord, thank you for creating each of us so differently. Keep me from assuming that my partner thinks and feels the way I do. Please give me the patience to find out how I can most effectively communicate love to my spouse.



JANUARY 2

LEARNING THE LOVE LANGUAGES

Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. 1 JOHN 4:11-12

MY RESEARCH INDICATES that there are five basic languages of love:

- ∞ Words of affirmation—using positive words to affirm the one you love
- ∞ Gifts—giving thoughtful gifts to show you were thinking about someone
- ∞ Acts of service—doing something that you know the other person would like
- ∞ Quality time—giving your undivided attention
- ∞ Physical touch—holding hands, kissing, embracing, putting a hand on the shoulder, or any other affirming touch

Out of these five, each of us has a primary love language. One of these languages speaks more deeply to us than the others. Do you know your love language? Do you know your spouse's?

Many couples earnestly love each other but do not communicate their love in an effective way. If you don't speak your spouse's primary love language, he or she may not feel loved, even when you are showing love in other ways.

The Bible makes it clear that we need to love each other as God loves us. The apostle John wrote that God's love can find "full expression" in us. If that's true for the church in general, how much more true is it for a couple? Finding out how your loved one feels love is an important step to expressing love effectively.

Father, help me to be a student of my spouse. I want to know how best to show my love. Please give me wisdom as I try to determine my beloved's love language.



FOLLOWING THE CLUES

I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. JOHN 13:34-35

WHAT DOES YOUR SPOUSE most often request of you? This is usually a clue to a person's love language. You may have interpreted these requests as nagging, but in fact, your spouse has been telling you what makes him or her feel loved.

For example, if your mate frequently requests that you take a walk after dinner, go on a picnic, turn off the TV and talk, or go away for a weekend together, these are requests for *quality time*. One wife told me, "I feel neglected and unloved because my husband seldom spends time with me. He gives me nice gifts on my birthday and wonders why I'm not excited about them. Gifts mean little when you don't feel loved." Her husband was sincere and was trying to demonstrate his love, but he was not speaking her love language.

As we see from the verse above, Jesus instructed his disciples to love each other as he had loved them. How does God love us? Perfectly and with complete understanding. He knows us, and he knows how we can experience his love. We can never love perfectly this side of heaven, of course. But discovering the love language of your spouse is an important step in the right direction.

Lord, thank you for knowing me perfectly and loving me perfectly. Help me to think carefully about what my spouse most often asks of me. Give me the wisdom to interpret that correctly so I can communicate love better to him or her.



JANUARY 4

REVEALING YOURSELF IN MARRIAGE

The LORD gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly. He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel.

PSALM 103:6-7

WHAT DO YOU KNOW about the art of self-revelation? It all began with God. God revealed himself to us through the prophets, the Scriptures, and supremely through Christ. As the verse above mentions, he revealed himself to the ancient Israelites through his actions. They saw him guiding them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, and as they did, they learned about him. If God had not chosen self-revelation, we would not know him.

The same principle is true in marriage. Self-revelation enables us to get to know each other's ideas, desires, frustrations, and joys. In a word, it is the road to intimacy. No self-revelation, no intimacy. So how do we learn the art of self-revelation?

You can begin by learning to speak for yourself. Communication experts often explain it as using "I" statements rather than "you" statements. For example, "I feel disappointed that you are not going with me to my mother's birthday dinner" is very different from "You have disappointed me again by not going to my mother's birthday dinner." When you focus on your reaction, you reveal your own emotions. Focusing on the other person's actions places blame. "You" statements encourage arguments. "I" statements encourage communication.

Father, help me to remember that revealing more of myself is the first step toward greater intimacy with the one I love. Thank you for revealing yourself to us, and please give me the courage to share myself with my spouse.



EXPRESSING FEELINGS

*For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. . . .
A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 4

SOME PEOPLE WONDER WHY they would ever want to share their feelings with their mate. The truth is, if you don't openly share your feelings, they will likely show up anyway in your behavior. However, your loved one will have no idea why you are behaving as you are. That's when you get the proverbial question, "Is something wrong?" Your spouse knows something is wrong but doesn't know what.

Emotions are a natural part of life. King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes that there is a time for everything, including joy and sorrow, grieving and celebration. All feelings have their place in our lives, and many of them communicate a lot about us. Most of our feelings are tied to some experience we have had in the past or something we're going through now. The next time you feel disappointed, ask yourself, *What stimulated my disappointment?* Then try to share whatever it is with your spouse.

Revealing your feelings lets your spouse know what is going on inside you—what you are feeling and why. For example, you might say, "I'm feeling angry with myself because I came home late last night and we missed our ride in the country." Such a statement may encourage your mate to say, "I'm disappointed too. Maybe we can do it on Thursday night." Revealing your feelings creates an atmosphere of intimacy and trust.

Lord, expressing emotions does not always come easily to me. Help me to remember that holding back my feelings only makes my spouse guess why I'm acting the way I am. Please give me the courage to share what I am feeling. May it bring us closer together.



JANUARY 6

SHARING DESIRES

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life.

PROVERBS 13:12

AS I'VE WRITTEN in the last few days about self-revelation, we've looked at sharing experiences and feelings. Today I want to talk about sharing desires. The failure to share desires is a source of much misunderstanding and frustration in any romantic relationship. Expecting your mate to fulfill your unexpressed desires is asking the impossible, and that makes disappointment inevitable. If you want your spouse to do something special on your birthday, for example, then say so. Don't expect your partner to read your mind.

In Proverbs 13:12, King Solomon presented a striking word picture of fulfilled and unfulfilled desires. Of course, not all our daily wishes rise to the level of making us heartsick if they're not fulfilled, but the basic idea is that when good, healthy desires are filled, joy can result. Why wouldn't you want to do that for your spouse? And why wouldn't your spouse want that for you?

Letting your spouse know what you want is a vital part of self-revelation. Several statements reveal desires: "I want . . .," "I wish . . .," "Do you know what would really make me happy?" or "I'd like to . . ." If you express your desires, your spouse has a chance to accommodate them. You are not demanding; you are requesting. You cannot control your spouse's decisions. You can clearly state what you would like. It's a step toward intimacy.

Father, help me to communicate my desires more openly. I don't want to be demanding, but I want to reveal more of myself—and the things I hold close to my heart—to the one I love. Please bless our relationship as we strive to fulfill each other's desires.



EXPLAINING OUR BEHAVIOR

O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. . . . Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand! PSALM 139:1-2, 6

THE ABOVE VERSES from Psalm 139 are some of the best loved in Scripture because they reveal that God knows us inside and out. He knows our thoughts, our feelings, and why we do the things we do. We can't even comprehend that level of understanding, much less reproduce it. That's why self-revelation is so important for a couple.

We've talked about sharing desires and emotions, but it's important to share about our behavior as well. Your spouse can observe your behavior, but he or she may not interpret it correctly unless you explain it. For example, my wife may observe that I dozed off while she was talking to me. It would be helpful for me to say, "I nodded off on you. I'm sorry. I took a pill for my headache, and it is making me sleepy. It's not that I don't want to hear what you have to say." That explanation helps her understand my behavior correctly.

Explaining your behavior ahead of time can also be helpful. "I plan to mow the lawn as soon as I get home from the ball game. Okay? I love you." Now, she doesn't have to fret all afternoon about the long grass while you are off to the ball game. She knows what you intend to do.

Revealing past behavior can also give your spouse valuable information. "Today I went by the furniture store and looked at a bedroom set. I really like it, and I think it is a good deal. I'd like for you to look at it." Explaining what you've done regarding a decision or request helps your spouse process it appropriately. All of these things promote understanding and intimacy for you as a couple.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you know us completely and love us anyway. Help us as a couple to aspire to a deeper knowledge of each other. Please encourage us as we learn to share about our behavior.