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How Many Languages Do You Speak?

Did you hear about the guy who surprised his self-confessed “nerd” wife on their tenth anniversary with a geek-themed wedding reception? He spent *eighteen months* planning the party, which featured his wife’s favorite pop-culture obsessions. The groomsmen wore superhero logos under their tuxes. Each tier of the wedding cake was dedicated to one of the couple’s favorite movies or TV shows—*Superman*, *Star Wars*, *Firefly*, and *Dr. Who*—and decorated accordingly. The ring bearer, the couple’s four-year-old son, wore a Superman cape. Somehow the guy managed to keep the whole thing a secret from his wife, even though all their friends and family were involved.

Then there was the guy who, for his one-year anniversary with his girlfriend, printed the story of how they fell in love on a bunch of flyers and posted them all over New York City. He asked people to take pictures of the flyers and post them on Instagram or Twitter, along with a

certain hashtag. The whole thing went viral in a matter of hours. The couple received over a thousand photos, including some tweeted by celebrities such as Matt Lauer.

Or maybe you heard about the guy who created a book for his wife for their sixth anniversary. He spent an entire year writing 365 things he loved about his wife and then compiling the pages into one volume, along with photos of the two of them taken over the years.

Stories like these usually draw one of two reactions from fellow husbands. Either we tip our hats to these guys and give them kudos for their creativity (not to mention their fifteen minutes of fame), or we curse their names for blowing the curve and making the rest of us look lame by comparison.

Here's the kicker: **Unless those guys made their plans with their wives' primary love languages in mind, they could have achieved the same results with, say, generic greeting cards and Chinese takeout.**

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY; IT'S THE LANGUAGE YOU USE

That's not a plug for Cantonese cuisine (though a good *dim sum* is never a bad thing)—or a knock against guys who try hard to impress their wives. Instead, it's an exclamation point on the importance of understanding love languages.

Everyone has a primary love language—a way of expressing devotion and affection that touches us deep inside, occasionally puts a goofy grin on our face, and leaves no doubt that we are truly and spectacularly loved.

As you probably deduced from the title of this book, there are five basic love languages:

1. Words of Affirmation (chapter 2)
2. Quality Time (chapter 3)
3. Gift Giving (chapter 4)
4. Acts of Service (chapter 5)
5. Physical Touch (chapter 6)

One of them is an expressway to your wife's heart. That's not to say she won't respond politely to one or more of the other languages, especially if she sees you making a real effort. Ultimately, though, those other four love languages are as foreign to her as Cantonese is to most native English speakers.

On the other hand, when you express your love for your wife using her *primary* love language, it's like hitting the sweet spot on a baseball bat or golf club. It just *feels right*—and the results are impressive.

THE NO-LOGIC ZONE

Logic suggests that men naturally gravitate toward women who share their primary love language—that quality timers pair up with quality timers and physical touchers have eyes only for other physical touchers; that with their shared love language, they communicate their affection easily and freely, forever and ever, amen.

Since when does logic have anything to do with love?

The truth is that people rarely marry partners who share their primary love language. Instead, guys who are built up by words of affirmation fall in love with girls who are built up through acts of service (or quality time or gift giving). Women who experience love primarily through gift giving are drawn to men who experience love through quality time (or physical touch or acts of service).

And a language barrier is created.

In the first stages of the relationship, when the couple is drunk with infatuation, they may not notice the language barrier. They may be so eager to please each other that they do things that are out of character—that is, they speak a love language they don't understand. They stay up all night talking about hopes and dreams. They take long walks, holding hands and walking with their arms around each other. They exchange small but meaningful presents.

Any concerns they may have about their differences get swept away in the tsunami of romance and excitement. The result? Two married people who speak and respond to different primary love languages.

Even those rare couples who share a primary love language find that there are countless different “dialects” within each language. No two people share the same language *and* the same dialect. No two people express and receive love in exactly the same way.

If that seems like a blueprint for failure, consider this: In the clubhouses of some of the most successful franchises in the NHL, MLB, and English Premier League, you can hear at least three (and probably more) different languages being spoken. The players on those teams *find* ways to communicate. People who are committed to excellence and success will not let a language barrier stand in their way.

WHEN THE HONEYMOON'S OVER

However, the obstacles are there. As the newness of the relationship wears off and the passion levels subside from their honeymoon crests, the two-language couple settles down into a routine. They go back to what they know best.

The acts of service-speaking husband gets busy showing his love for his wife in his “native tongue.” He keeps her car serviced and clean. He tightens the washers on the leaky faucet. He repaints the bedroom and puts up new trim to match the room she saw and loved on HGTV.

Though his quality time-speaking wife appreciates the many things he does for her, she also pines for the long conversations they used to have when they were dating—the concentrated time and attention that feeds her soul. She longs for her husband to speak to her in her primary love language. As a result, her “love tank”—her reservoir of feeling genuinely adored, appreciated, and *known*—starts to empty.

How the scenario plays out from there depends on the couple. Some will chalk it up to the natural course of love and romance and settle for whatever is left. Some will blame the busyness and pressures of everyday life. Some will allow their frustrations and unmet needs to fester and spark conflicts and accusations. Some will suffer in silence, with each partner thinking something is wrong with him or her. Some will eventually convince themselves that they made a mistake in getting married in the first place.

There's no telling exactly what will happen when a person's love tank is empty.

WHERE THERE IS CHALLENGE, THERE IS OPPORTUNITY

Someone once said insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. If right, that means the approach many spouses take toward overcoming their language barrier is downright crazy. They double down on their own love language, trying over and over again to break through to their spouse in the only way they know. In other words, they work harder instead of smarter. They put the onus on their spouse to translate their actions into a language the spouse can understand.

Good intentions won't get the job done.

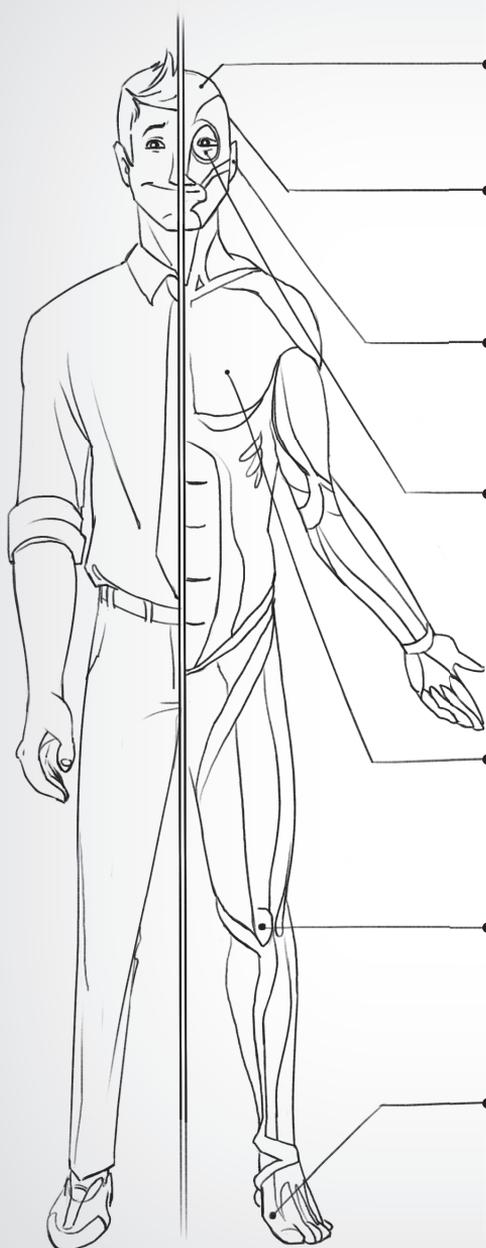
It doesn't matter that your heart is in the right place, or that you're trying as hard as you possibly can, or that other women would feel lucky to have a husband like you. You will not be able to fill your wife's love tank without using her primary love language.

The way to build a
thriving
exciting
unpredictable
awe-inspiring
life-changing

relationship with your wife is to master her primary love language, to embrace the challenge of becoming bilingual. The good news is that the process isn't nearly as challenging as learning an actual language. You don't have to worry about conjugating verbs or using the proper tense.

The challenge of becoming fluent in another love language might be better compared to perfecting a golf swing. If you've ever taken lessons from a pro, you know the first step is to "unlearn" all the

EQUIPPED FOR SUCCESS



SHORT MEMORY

Not everything you try is going to work. In fact, your learning curve may be pretty steep. Keep in mind that whatever failure happened yesterday stays there. Today is a new day.

CREATIVITY

No idea is too off-the-wall or unconventional if it makes your wife feel truly loved. Thinking outside the box is highly encouraged.

LISTENING TO GOOD ADVICE

Don't miss opportunities to pick the brains of people whose relationships you admire. Press your role models for their secrets. See if there are any that will work for you and your wife.

VISION

The ability to spot new opportunities to show love to your wife—and to recognize whether old strategies are working—is key to becoming bilingual.

ENDURANCE

Mastering a new love language is a marathon, not a sprint. You'll get tired, discouraged, and frustrated along the way. Press on. And when you think you've got the language mastered, keep going. Keep learning. Keep trying new things. Keep finding new ways to make your wife feel loved.

PRAYER

You may not be a religious man, but when it comes to your relationship with your wife, you need all the help you can get. Don't be afraid to ask God for wisdom in how to effectively meet your wife's need for love.

FIRM STANCE

Nothing is more important than your relationship with your wife. Protecting and perfecting that relationship is Job One. Hold tight to that mindset and you'll set yourself up nicely for eventual success.

bad habits you've developed over the years. In many cases, that involves starting from scratch. The process is awkward at first. Things just don't feel right. They feel unnatural. Little by little, though, that starts to change. With enough repetition, you start to see positive results.

The same goes for learning a new love language. If you're an acts of service guy, you're probably not going to feel comfortable giving quality time to your wife. Not at first, at least. Your initial efforts likely will feel unnatural and forced.

But with the right attitude—and with the tips and strategies outlined in the pages that follow—you *will* master a second love language. You *will* fill your wife's love tank and keep it topped off. You *will* make her feel uniquely and spectacularly loved. You *will* experience what it's like to be on the top of your game, not just as a loving husband to your wife but also as a role model—to your children; to other young people who don't see that kind of behavior modeled in their own families; to other husbands who are looking for answers.

To become bilingual in the languages of love is to make a difference in other people's lives.

