



**Bestselling author and marriage counselor Gary Chapman** believes that divorce is the lack of preparation for marriage. This practical book is packed with wisdom and tips to develop a loving, supportive, and mutually beneficial marriage. It's the type of information Gary himself wished he had before he got married. Dating or engaged couples will enjoy the "Talking it Over" sections.

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LIFEWAY 

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## Chapter 1

# **I Wish I'd Known . . . That Being in Love Is Not an Adequate Foundation for Building a Successful Marriage**

It should have been obvious, but I missed it. I had never read a book on marriage so my mind was not cluttered with reality. I just knew that I had feelings for Karolyn that I had never felt with any other girl. When we kissed, it was like a trip to heaven. When I saw her after an extended absence, I actually felt chill bumps. I liked

everything about her. I liked the way she looked, the way she talked, the way she walked, and I was especially captivated by her brown eyes. I even liked her mother and volunteered to paint her house—anything to let this girl know how much I loved her. I could not imagine any other girl being more wonderful than her. I think she had the same thoughts and feelings about me.

With all of these thoughts and feelings, we fully intended to make each other happy the rest of our lives. Yet, within six months after marriage, we were both more miserable than we had ever imagined. The euphoric feelings were gone, and instead, we felt hurt, anger, disappointment, and resentment. This, we never anticipated when we were “in love.” We thought that the positive perceptions and feelings we had for each other would be with us for a lifetime.

Over the past forty years, I have done premarital counseling sessions with hundreds of couples. I have found that most of them have the same limited perspective about being in love. I have often asked couples in our first session this question: “Why do you want to get married?” Whatever else they say, they always give me the big reason. And the big reason is almost always the same: “Because we love each other.” Then I ask a very unfair question: “What do you mean by that?” Typically they are stunned by the question. Most say something about a deep feeling that they have for each other. It has persisted for some time and is in some way different from what they have felt for other dating partners. Often they look at each other, they look at the ceiling, they giggle, and then one of them says, “Well, ah . . . oh, you know.” At this stage of my life, I think I do know—but I doubt that they know. I fear that they have the same perception of being in love that Karolyn and I had when we got married. And I know now that being in love is not a sufficient

foundation on which to build a successful marriage.

Some time ago I had a call from a young man who asked if I would perform his wedding ceremony. I inquired as to when he wanted to get married and found that the wedding date was less than a week away. I explained that I usually have from six to eight counseling sessions with those who desire to be married. His response was classic: “Well, to be honest with you, I don’t think we need any counseling. We really love each other, and I don’t think we will have any problems.” I smiled and then wept inwardly—another victim of the “in love” illusion.

We often speak of “falling in love.” When I hear this phrase, I am reminded of the jungle animal hunt. A hole is dug in the midst of the animal’s path to the water hole, then camouflaged with branches and leaves. The poor animal runs along, minding his own business. Then all of a sudden it falls into the pit and is trapped.

This is the manner in which we speak of love. We are walking along doing our normal duties when all of a sudden, we look across the room or down the hall, and there she/he is—whammo, we “fall in love.” There is nothing we can do about it. It is completely beyond our control. We know we are destined for marriage; the sooner the better. So, we tell our friends and because they operate on the same principle, they agree that if we are really in love, then it is time for marriage.

Often we fail to consider the fact that our social, spiritual, and intellectual interests are miles apart. Our value systems and goals are contradictory, but we are in love. The great tragedy stemming from this perception of love is that a year after the marriage, a couple sits in the counselor’s office and says, “We don’t love each other anymore.” Therefore, they are ready to separate. After all, if “love” is gone, then “surely you don’t expect us to stay together.”

## WHEN “THE TINGLES” STRIKE

I have a different word for the above-described emotional experience. I call it “the tingles.” We get warm, bubbly, tingly feelings for a member of the opposite sex. It is the tingles that motivate us to go out for a hamburger with them. Sometimes we lose the tingles on the first date. We find out something about them that simply shuts our emotions down. The next time they invite us for a hamburger, we are not hungry. However, in other relationships, the more we are together, the tinglier the feeling. Before long, we find ourselves thinking about them day and night. Our thoughts are obsessive in nature. We see them as the most wonderful, exciting person we have ever known. We want to be together every possible moment. We dream of sharing the rest of our lives making each other happy.

Please do not misunderstand me. I think the tingles are important. They are real, and I am in favor of their survival. But they are not the basis for a satisfactory marriage. I am not suggesting that one should marry without the tingles. Those warm, excited feelings—the chill bumps, that sense of acceptance, the excitement of the touch that make up the tingles—serve as the cherry on top of the sundae. But you cannot have a sundae with only the cherry. The many other factors that we discuss in this book must be a vital consideration in making a decision about marriage.

Being in love is an emotional and obsessive experience. However, emotions change and obsessions fade. Research indicates that the average life span of the “in love” obsession is two years.<sup>1</sup> For some it may last a bit longer; for some, a bit less. But the average is two years. Then we come down off the emotional high and those aspects of life that we disregarded in our euphoria begin to become important. Our differences begin to emerge and we often find ourselves arguing with the person whom we once thought to be perfect.

We have now discovered for ourselves that being in love is not the foundation for a happy marriage.

For those of you who are currently in a dating relationship and are perhaps contemplating marriage, I would encourage you to read the appendix of this book, located on page 139. I believe that the primary purpose of dating is to get to know each other and to examine the intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, and physical foundations for marriage. Only then are you able to make a wise decision—to marry or not to marry. The questions contained in the learning exercises in the appendix will assist you in discussing these foundations.

## TALKING IT OVER

1. On a scale of 0–10, how strongly do you feel the “tingles” for the person you are dating?
2. If the average “life span” of the tingles is two years, how much longer can you expect to have the euphoric feelings?
3. To what degree have you explored the more important issues of compatibility in the following areas?
  - intellectual dialogue
  - emotional control
  - social interests
  - spiritual unity
  - common values
4. If you would like to explore these areas more fully, you may wish to use the questions found in the appendix, “Developing a Healthy Dating Relationship.”



## Chapter 2

# I Wish I'd Known . . . That Romantic Love Has Two Stages

I was at the airport in Chicago when I met Jan, who was on her way to visit her fiancé for the weekend. When she inquired about where I was going, I said, “I’m going to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to lead a marriage seminar tomorrow.” “What do you do at marriage seminars?” she asked. “I try to give people practical ideas on how to work on their marriage,” I replied. With a question in her eyes she asked, “Why do you have to work on a marriage? If you love each other, isn’t that all that matters?” I knew she was sincere because that was also my perception before I got married.

**With a question in her eyes she asked, “Why do you have to work on a marriage?”**

Since neither of us was rushed for our next flight, I took time to explain to her that there are two stages of romantic love. The first stage requires little effort. We are pushed along by euphoric feelings (which I described in the previous chapter). We commonly call this stage “being in love.” When we are *in love*, we freely do things for each other without thought of cost or sacrifice. We will drive 500 miles or fly halfway across the country in order to spend a weekend together. Jan nodded approval. The person we love seems to be perfect—at least perfect for us. I quickly added, “Now, your mother may have a different opinion. She may say, ‘Honey, have you considered . . .’” Jan smiled and said, “Yes, I’ve heard that lecture.”

In this stage of romantic love, the couple does not have to *work* on the relationship. They may expend great energy in doing things for each other, but they would not consider it work. They would tend to use the word *delight*. They feel elated with the opportunity to do something meaningful for the other person. They want to make each other happy and they often do. However, as I indicated in chapter 1, the average life span of this initial stage of romantic love is two years. We do not stay in the euphoric stage of love forever. Actually, this is good because it is difficult to concentrate on anything else when you are *in love*. If you are in college when you fall in love, your grades will likely decline. Tomorrow you have a test on the War of 1812. Who cares about the War of 1812 when you are in love? Education seems trivial; what matters is being with the person you love. All of us have known individuals who drop out of college and choose to get married because the one they love is moving to a different state and they want to go with them.

If the obsessive nature of the *in love* euphoria extended for the next twenty years, few of us would accomplish our educational and

vocational potential. Involvement in social issues and philanthropic endeavors would be nil. When we are *in love*, the rest of the world doesn't matter. We are totally focused on being with each other and making each other happy.

Before I got married, no one informed me that there were two stages of romantic love. I knew that I was in love with Karolyn and I anticipated having these feelings toward her for the rest of my life. I knew that she made me happy, and I wanted to do the same for her. When in fact I came down off of the emotional high, I was disillusioned. I remembered the warnings my mother had given me, and I was plagued with the recurring thought, "I have married the wrong person." I reasoned that if I had married the right person, surely my feelings would not have subsided so quickly after marriage. These were painful thoughts that were hard to shake. *Our differences seem so obvious now. Why did I not see them earlier?*

**The second stage of romantic love is much more intentional than the first stage.**

## THE SECOND STAGE OF LOVE

I wish someone had been there to tell me that what I was thinking and feeling was normal; that in fact, there are two stages to romantic love and I had to make the transition. Unfortunately, no one was there to give me this information. Had I received the information I am about to give to you, it would have saved me from years of marital struggle. What I have discovered is that the second stage of romantic love is much more intentional than the first stage. And, yes, it requires work in order to keep emotional love alive. However, for those who make the effort to transition from Stage

One to Stage Two, the rewards are astounding.

As a young marriage counselor, I began to discover that what makes one person feel loved does not necessarily make another person feel loved; and that when couples come down off the *in love* emotional high, they often miss each other in their efforts to express love. She says, "I feel like he doesn't love me," and he says, "I don't understand that. I work hard. I keep the car clean. I mow the grass every weekend. I help her around the house. I don't know what else she would want." She responds, "He does all those things. He is a hardworking man." Then with tears in her eyes she says, "But we don't ever talk."

Week after week, I kept hearing similar stories. So I decided to look at the notes I had made when I was counseling couples and ask myself, "When someone said, 'I feel like my spouse doesn't love me,' what were they looking for? What did they want? What were they complaining about?" Their complaints fell into five categories. I later called them the five love languages.

The dynamics are very similar to spoken languages. Each of us grows up speaking a language with a dialect. I grew up speaking English Southern-style. But everyone has a language and a dialect and that is the one we understand best. The same is true with love. Everyone has a primary love language. One of the five speaks more deeply to us emotionally than the other four. I also discovered that seldom do a husband and wife have the same love language. By nature we tend to speak our own language. Whatever makes us feel loved is what we do for the other person. But if it is not his/her language, it will not mean to them what it means to us. In the illustration above, the husband was speaking the language of *acts of service*. He was washing the car, mowing the grass, helping her

around the house. To him, this is the way you express love. But her love language was *quality time*. She said, "We don't ever talk." What made her feel loved was him giving her his undivided attention talking, sharing life, listening, and communicating. He was sincerely expressing love but it was not in her primary love language.

The book that grew out of this research is entitled *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts*. It has sold over fifteen million copies in English and has been translated into over fifty languages around the world. It has helped literally millions of couples learn how to connect with each other and keep emotional love alive. They have made the transition from Stage One to Stage Two. They have learned how to express love effectively.

Here is a brief summary of the five love languages:

- 1. Words of Affirmation.** This language uses words to affirm the other person. "I really appreciate your washing the car. It looks great." "Thanks for taking out the garbage. You are the greatest." "You look nice in that outfit." "I love the fact that you are so optimistic." "I admire the way you helped your mother." "Your smile is contagious. Did you see the way everyone seemed to brighten up when you came into the room?" All of these are words of affirmation. Your words may focus on the other person's personality or the way they look or something they have done for you or for others. To speak this language, you look for things you admire or appreciate about the person and you verbally express your admiration. If a person's primary love language is *words of affirmation*, your words will be like rain falling on dry soil. Nothing will speak more deeply of your love than words of affirmation.

- 2. Acts of Service.** For these people, actions speak louder than words. If you speak words of affirmation to this person such as “I admire you, I appreciate you, I love you,” they will likely think and perhaps say, “If you love me, why don’t you do something to help me around the house?” If *acts of service* is their primary love language, then washing the car, mowing the grass, helping around the house, and changing the baby’s diaper is precisely what makes them feel loved. The key to loving this person is to find out what things they would like for you to do. Then do them consistently.
- 3. Receiving Gifts.** For some people, what makes them feel most loved is to receive a gift. The gift communicates, “He was thinking about me. Look what he got for me.” The best gifts are those that you know will be appreciated. To give her a fishing rod when she does not enjoy fishing will probably not communicate your love very well. How do you find out what the other person would like to receive? You ask questions and you make observations. You observe the comments they make when they receive gifts from other family members. Listen carefully and you will discover the kind of gifts they appreciate most. Also listen to the comments they make when they are scrolling online or when you two are browsing in a bookstore, home design shop, outdoor gear retailer—whatever your or your spouse’s interest is. If they say, “I’d like to have one of those,” make a note of it. You can also overtly ask, “If I wanted to give you a gift, give me a list of things you would like to have.” Better to give a gift that they have requested than to surprise them with a gift they do not desire. Not all gifts need to be expensive. A rose, a candy bar, a card,

a book—any of these can communicate love deeply to the person whose love language is *receiving gifts*.

- 4. Quality Time.** Quality time is giving the other person your undivided attention. It is not sitting in the same room watching TV. Someone else has your attention. It is being in the same room with the TV and phone off, looking at each other, talking, and listening. It may also be taking a walk together so long as your purpose is to be with each other, not simply to get exercise. Couples who go to a restaurant and never talk to each other have not spoken the language of *quality time*. They have simply met their physical need for food. Quality time says, “I’m doing this because I want to be with you.” Whether you are planting a garden together or going on a camping trip, the ultimate purpose is to spend time with each other. For some people, nothing makes them feel more loved than *quality time*.
- 5. Physical Touch.** We have long known the emotional power of physical touch. Research indicates that babies who are touched and cuddled fare better emotionally than babies who spend long periods of time without physical touch. Every culture has appropriate and inappropriate touches between members of the opposite of sex. Appropriate touch is loving. Inappropriate touch is demeaning. To the person whose primary love language is *physical touch*, nothing speaks more deeply than appropriate touch.

## HOW TO FIND YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE

Here are three approaches to help you discover your own primary love language. First, *observe your own behavior*. How do you

typically express love and appreciation to other people? If you are always patting people on the back or giving them hugs, then your primary language may be *physical touch*. If you freely give encouraging words to others, then *words of affirmation* is likely your love language. If you are a gift giver, then perhaps what you desire is *receiving gifts*. If you enjoy having lunch or taking a walk with a friend, then *quality time* is probably your love language. If you are always looking for ways to help people, then *acts of service* may well be your love language. The language you speak is most likely the language you wish to receive.

Second, *what do you complain about?* In any human relationship, what is your most common complaint? If you often complain that people don't help you, then *acts of service* is likely your language. If you say to a friend, "We don't ever spend time together," then you are indicating that *quality time* is your love language. If your friend goes on a business trip and you say, "You didn't bring me anything?" you are revealing that *receiving gifts* is your primary love language. If you say, "I don't think you would ever touch me if I didn't initiate it," you are saying that *physical touch* is your love language. If you complain, "I don't ever do anything right," your complaint indicates that *words of affirmation* speak deeply to you. The complaints reveal what you most like to receive from other people.

Third, *what do you request most often?* If your friend is leaving on a business trip and you say, "Be sure and bring me a surprise," you are indicating that gifts are important to you. If you say, "Could we take a walk together this evening?" you are requesting *quality time*. If you ask for a back rub, you are revealing that *physical touch* speaks deeply to you. If you often ask people to do things to help you, *acts of service* is likely your love language. When you ask, "Did



I do a good job?” you are requesting *words of affirmation*.

Observe how you most often express love and appreciation to others; list your complaints and requests, and you will likely be able to determine your own primary love language. Have your friend answer the same three questions and they can discover their love language. You may also wish to take the free love language quiz available at [5lovelanguages.com](http://5lovelanguages.com).

It will be obvious that learning to speak a love language other than your own will take effort. The person who did not grow up receiving words of affirmation may find it difficult to give them. The person who grew up in a family that was not “touchy-feely” will have to learn to speak the language of *physical touch*. The good news is that all of these languages can be learned and the more you speak them, the easier they become.

My wife’s love language is *acts of service*. That’s why I vacuum floors, wash dishes, and take out the garbage. It’s a small price to keep love alive. My language is *words of affirmation*. That’s why I never leave the house without hearing my wife give me a positive word. Without hesitation, I can say that the emotional depth of our love for each other is far deeper than in those early days when we were swept along by euphoric feelings. Keeping romantic love alive in a marriage requires making a successful transition from Stage One to Stage Two. Learning each other’s primary love language while you are dating will make the transition much easier. That is my desire for you.

## TALKING IT OVER

1. What do you think is your primary love language? Why?
2. If you are dating, what do you think is the primary love language of your partner?
3. Perhaps you would like to take the love languages quiz found at [5lovelanguages.com](http://5lovelanguages.com).
4. Discuss how you think what you learn from the quiz will enhance your relationship.
5. If you have not read *The 5 Love Languages Singles Edition*, you may wish to read it together and discuss its implications in all of your relationships.

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