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## BOOK REVIEW

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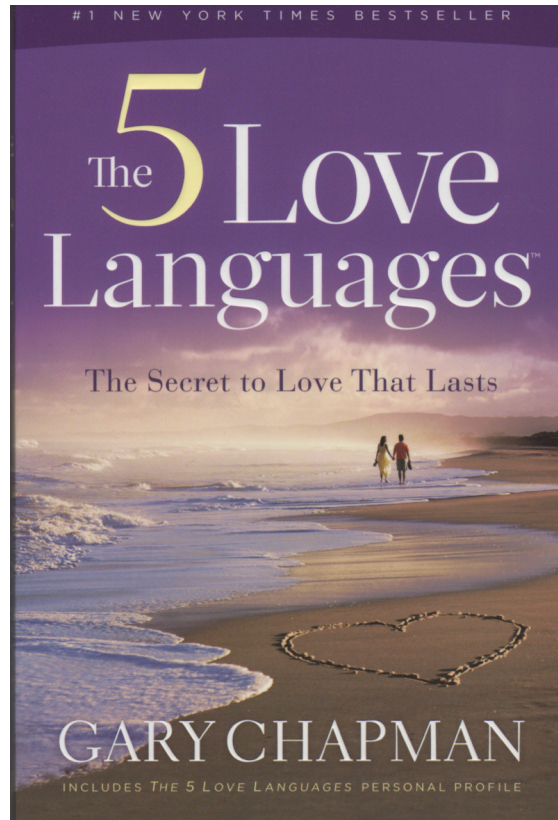
### **"The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts" by Gary Chapman**

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**Reviewed by Dr Darryl Cross,**  
**leadership & careers coach**  
**& psychologist**  
[www.DrDarryl.com](http://www.DrDarryl.com)



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First published in 1992, *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts* has become a classic relationship book. There are many others that address how to communicate better with your spouse and the fact that even the most in-love people can have very different ways of expressing love, but Dr. Gary Chapman was one of the first to clearly explain how to identify languages of love and use that knowledge to improve relationships. He shows why even the best-intentioned spouse can be frustrated in their efforts to express love.

In the first chapter called "What Happens to Love after the Wedding?" Chapman says, "We speak and understand best our native language...If we are to communicate effectively across cultural lines, we must learn the language of those with whom we wish to communicate. In the area of love, it is similar. Your emotional love language and the language of your spouse may be as different as Chinese from English...We must be willing to learn our spouse's primary love language if we are to be effective communicators of love."

He says that while there are many other conclusions from studies and great suggestions about how improve your marriage, identifying and learning to speak your spouse's primary love language, and knowing how it relates to your own language, makes applying all the other helpful principles much more effective.

There are other interesting and helpful concepts in *The 5 Love Languages* such as how to simply make the choice to continue loving your spouse even in the face of marital challenges. Another you might have heard of is the idea of the "love tank" being like the gas tank in your car. Sometimes it's empty; sometimes it's full; and filling the tank of your lover in a way that's meaningful for them is essential to a long and happy relationship. And Chapman leaves wiggle room in his five-languages theory by allowing for numerous dialects within each that are key to communication in that language.

Here are the five languages that Chapman defines:

**Words of Affirmation:** This is verbal appreciation; pretty simple. But it also includes having a shoulder to lean on, being offered encouragement, being supported through difficult times and difficult decisions, and receiving acknowledgement.

**Quality Time:** Some feel most loved when you provide them your undivided attention. What they really want is care and focus; an intimate date is only "quality time" with the added ingredients of focus, sharing, and truly listening. Activities that you both enjoy are important to a relationship in which one partner is a "quality time" speaker.

**Receiving Gifts:** On the surface, gift-giving might sound like a fairly superficial language for love, but Chapman explores humans' very long association of marriage with gifts. The key here is not so specifically gifts, but visual symbols of love and gifts of oneself. Giving a tangible gift should be seen as an investment in the relationship. Giving of one's physical body by being physically there for your spouse is also a powerful symbol of love.

**Acts of Service:** Sharing the humblest of marital chores translates to sharing life in general. Here Chapman's dialects definitely come into play, because this language breaks down into different categories of services that people want to receive. Is it

laundry and yard work, or is it child-rearing and social obligations? The key is to offer acts of service out of the kindness of your heart and not from obligation, guilt, or resentment.

**Physical Touch:** This one sounds easy, but sexual relations are only one dialect of this language. There are many parts of the body that crave physical stimulation. Think backrubs, gazing into one another's eyes, holding hands, and hugging. The flip side is being aware of what kinds of touch do *not* kindle love for your partner.

There's an example in the book about a husband whose wife's primary love language is "acts of service." "I came home and said to her, 'On a scale of zero to ten, how's your love tank tonight?' She said, 'About seven.' I asked, 'What could I do to help fill it?' She said, 'The greatest thing you could do for me tonight is do the laundry.' The man just didn't get it. His love language was "physical touch." Chapman said, "Listen to me carefully. The love you feel when your wife expresses love by physical touch is the same love your wife feels when you do the laundry."

Chapman's writing is easy to read and often funny. He uses real examples from his counselling practice to illustrate his messages. He works as a Christian counsellor and marriage counsellor, and hosts national radio programs called *A Love Language Minute* and *Building Relationships with Gary Chapman*. His educational background is in anthropology, and he spent a great deal of time travelling the world and learning about marriage in many different cultures. He is also a pastor, and earned his doctorate in adult education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas in the U.S. He has written twenty-five books in his field and is a very popular and well-known expert on marriage.

Each chapter ends with a "Your Turn" section that helps you apply the knowledge from that chapter. There's also a "Frequently Asked Questions" chapter at the end that is quite helpful, and two twenty-question profiles, one for men and one for women, to help you identify your love language.

The concept of expressing your love to your partner in the language they understand the best is simple yet foundational in transitioning from romantic love to a lasting, fulfilling, and loving marriage, and it is as relevant today as it was in 1992.

[Dr Darryl Cross is a clinical and organisational psychologist as well as a credentialed executive and personal coach. He is also an author, international speaker and university lecturer. Dr Darryl assists people to find their strengths and reach their goals. Further information on Dr Darryl can be seen at [www.DrDarryl.com](http://www.DrDarryl.com)]

