

McCabe United Methodist Church
Making Love Last (part 3)
“Love After the Honeymoon”
Colossians 3:12-14
2-10-13
Pastor Ray Baker

Our current sermon series is about Making Love Last. Today’s scripture passage didn’t talk specifically about how couples should treat each other, but we can learn a lot from these verses. The author is telling us how we, as Christians, are to treat one another with: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and: “Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (NRSV)

We’ve already talked about “What Women Wish Men Knew about Women” and “What Men Wish Women Knew about Men.” Today, we will talk about what happens when a relationship becomes too comfortable. What happens to Love, “After the Honeymoon?”

It’s easy for a couple to become so comfortable with each other that they become complacent. They take each other for granted. They forget what it was like when they were first dating. They forget to express their love openly.

One of the books we’ve been discussing is: The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman. He points out its very important to we learn each other’s love language in order to maintain our relationships. He identified five different ways people share and receive love: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time together, (giving and) Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch.

They are simple, common, everyday acts. They don’t take much effort or thought. That’s what makes them beautiful. That’s what makes them important. But now that we are not trying to win over our partner, we may have forgotten to do these simple, common, everyday acts. AND...unfortunately, not everyone knew their partners love language before the Honeymoon was over.

One day Ole was talking to Lars when he said, "I really don't know what I should get Lena for our anniversary."

"Well, what did you get her last time?" asked Lars.

"I gave her trip to Germany," answered Ole.

Lars suggested, "Maybe you should take her on another trip."

Ole thought for a while and then said: "It would be the perfect gift! I'll send her an airline ticket so she can come home!"

One night, a torrential rain soaked northwestern Minnesota. The next morning the floodwaters came up about 6 feet into most of the homes there.

Mrs. Johnson was sitting on her roof with her neighbor, Lena, waiting for help to come. Mrs. Johnson noticed a baseball cap, floating near the house.

Then she saw it float far out into the front yard, then float back to the house; it kept floating away from the house, then back towards the house.

She asked Lena, "Do you see that baseball cap a floatin' away from da house, den back again?"

Lena said, "Oh yeah, that's my husband Ole; I told that lazy-such and such he was gonna cut the grass today, come hell or high water!!!"

One of the reasons we like Ole and Lena jokes is they don't know each other's love language. It's easy to laugh at them because we can see just a little bit of ourselves or our neighbor in the joke.

Sarah and I have friends; I will call them, Tim and Val. If you ask Val, she will tell you Tim is a pest. They can't walk by each other without Tim reaching out to touch her. If she's standing in the kitchen he will walk up and rub her shoulders. If they are passing in the hallway he won't let her pass without a hug. When they're sitting on the couch he throws his leg over hers.

When Sarah told Val about the five love languages, she started to realize he wasn't a pest, but his actions were gift of love. She also learned that when Tim is "stressed out" she can rub his shoulders or arm and before long...he will start to calm down, because he is receiving her gift of love.

We have two other friends, I will call them Brian and Lisa, who don't communicate very well. Brian thinks Lisa should clean the house, work outside the home, help in the

fields, and still have dinner ready for him at 9:00 or 10:00...when they return from the field. As you can imagine, this causes hurt feelings. But the amazing thing is Lisa does all these things as an Act of Service, showing Brian how much she loves him.

We keep working on Brian and we hope someday he will learn to say: "Thank you" or "I appreciate all you do for me." When he learns to take that step Lisa will happily give him the gift of acts of service.

Sarah and I are like every other couple. We've had good times during our twenty-six (26) years of marriage. But, we've also had some difficult times. The difficult times happen when one or both of us take the other for granted...acting like the honeymoon is over. In addition, we did not always understand what the other person needed...we did not understand each other's love language.

Sarah's love languages are spending quality time together and giving and receiving gifts. She loves going out with family and friends. We play frof (Frisbee golf) with our kids, watch a ball game, or just goof around.

She also loves to buy gifts for the special people in her life. This can't be done in a few minutes...it will likely take the afternoon, because it's important to savor the time it takes to find the right gift.

She receives gifts the same way. Each gift is savored and remembered. She can point to the items in our home and tell you who gave us the gift and when. If you give her a gift of clothing she will try it on right away and make sure you know how much she loves it.

But I didn't understand. We were joking around about this last week and Sarah said: "I don't like it when I give you a gift and you let it hang in your closet." Little did I know she was setting a trap, by speaking figuratively when I was thinking literally.

Do you like my shirt and tie? Sarah bought them for me over two years ago and they have been hanging in my closet. This is the first weekend I've worn them. Notice the price tag is still attached to the tie. When I showed this shirt to Sarah she looked it over and said: It's a good thing the shirt is black, because it will match your new black and blue marks. No, seriously...she said: "This is one of three shirts I bought you that day. The other two were purple and gray."

She remembered. Gifts are very important to Sarah. I need to understand this part of her or our marriage will suffer. When I put one of Sarah's gifts in the back of my closet, she feels like I don't appreciate her gift...like I don't appreciate her...and, if it happens too often, like I don't love her.

My love languages are...acts of service and physical touch. I like to work behind the scenes, doing day to day projects at home. If Sarah needs something I'm happy to help out. If she needs support, I will drop what I'm doing to help her. If she forgets her computer at home I will drive it to McClusky, if it's my day off. Physical touch is also important to me. I enjoy Sarah's hugs, holding hands, and sitting close to her.

But Sarah Didn't Understand. When Sarah attended the University of Mary, to become a Family Nurse Practitioner, I stepped up to the plate and started doing more around the house. Sarah was very busy. She was a fulltime graduate student, she worked at least 24 hours a week, and she was a fulltime mom.

When she started working in McClusky I continued to help out around the house. Occasionally, I asked if she would spend 10 minutes a day helping me pick up the daily clutter. We can both remember the day I asked for her help and she responded: "I don't care about the clutter. I have ten other things that I need to do each day before I think about picking up."

When Sarah said I don't care about the clutter...it felt like she didn't care about all my efforts...it felt like she was saying she didn't care about me.

Was that single comment that big of a deal? No. But things had built up over time. And that's what happens when we don't understand each other's love languages.

We have a stronger marriage today because we understand how the other person expresses and receives the gift of love. Last week I bought Sarah a small bouquet of spring flowers.... I told her I bought them..."just because." Every evening I prepare our automatic coffee maker to brew a pot of coffee at 5:50 a.m. Each morning I give Sarah the gift of a cup of coffee. To say: I love you.

Sarah does a number of simple, small things round the house to take care of me. She even hangs my shirts facing the same direction on the hanger...just because she

knows I like it that way. When we sit at the kitchen counter or on the couch she sits next to me and rests her knee against mine or she snuggles in close...to give me the gift of physical touch. She does this to say: I love you.

Do you know your partners love language? How often do you do the simple, common, everyday things to say I love you? I guarantee you... your relationship will be stronger when you learn your partner's love language. It makes it easier to give and receive the gift of love...even when the honeymoon is over.

Winston Churchill once attended a formal banquet in London, where the dignitaries were asked the question, "If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?" Naturally everyone was curious as to what Churchill would say. When it was finally his turn he rose and gave his answer.

"If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be..." and here he paused to take his wife's hand, "...Lady Churchill's second husband."

I invite you to come back next week. Pastor Rick will lead a service to celebrate your relationship and to renew your commitment to "Make Love Last." Amen.