

This Simple Act Can Help Bring Much-Needed Unity to the Body of Christ

The Five Love Languages by counselor Gary Chapman has been on the Christian bestseller list for years. The book reveals how people express love in different ways.

Words of affirmation, spending quality time with loved ones, gift giving, acts of service and physical touch are several ways to receive and express love.

Problems arise if a person doesn't understand that his or her partner may speak a different "language" when expressing love. Not feeling loved is a common result.

Similarly, we differ in how we express our love to God. How do these love languages relate to our prayer life and our relationships with God and others in the body?

Some express love by service—by doing things. Others express love by spending time with God. I wonder if people who express love through physical touch long to sense God's presence. They may seek experiential worship more than words of affirmation.

People pray differently, too. Our spiritual gifts and personality types influence how we pray.

For example, a person with a gift of encouragement probably gets excited about praying for people's needs. But a person with the gift of evangelism may become frustrated in a prayer meeting where the only requests lifted up are the needs of the body. Why? He or she wants to pray for the lost.

Given the same request, a pessimist prays differently from an optimist. In praying for the area around a church, the pessimist will remind God of the problems—the broken homes,

the drugs and the gangs. The optimist will pray God's blessing on that same neighborhood. We need both types of prayer.

If we don't understand these different styles, we may get annoyed with others in the body. If those of us who are doers don't see enough people in service for the Lord, we think they don't love Jesus and that they aren't committed. It may be that they speak another language and express their love through giving. Or maybe they show their love for Jesus by spending more time in prayer.

I believe a simple understanding of the various ways we express love and pray can go a long way toward bringing unity to our churches. The truth of 1 Corinthians 12 applies here—the body is made up of many different parts, but all need to work together and understand how each one functions.

We should apply the love described in 1 Corinthians 13 and appreciate variety in the ways we express our love for Jesus Christ and in how we pray. In fact, we need to enjoy these differences.

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