



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Life Lessons and Love Languages – Part 2

Guest(s): Gary Chapman

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson, and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we are bringing you the conclusion of Dr. Tim Clinton's recent conversation with Dr. Gary Chapman. Gary is the author of the bestselling book, *The Five Love Languages*, which has sold over 20 million copies and has been on the *New York Times* Bestseller List since 2007. What an accomplishment! Gary is also a marriage counselor and the director of the popular Five Love Languages Marriage Seminars. He recently retired from being on staff at Calvary Baptist Church in North Carolina, where he served for 50 years. He still volunteers at Calvary, though, and he and his wife, Karolyn, are active members in their church community.

On yesterday's program, Dr. Clinton and Dr. Chapman began their conversation on the topic of Gary Chapman's new autobiographical book called *Life Lessons and Love Languages*. Gary told some very insightful stories about his childhood and his young adult years. So, if you missed yesterday's program, make sure you go to our website, drjamesdobson.org, to check it out. Here now is the conclusion of their conversation right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary, welcome back. What a fascinating discussion we had yesterday about the love languages and the journey of your life. Writing this book, *Life Lessons and Love Languages: What I've Learned from My Unexpected Journey*, what a fascinating read. But Gary, more significantly, in my mind, is what a fascinating life and how we appreciate how you've committed your heart and life to Christ and, by the way, to the gospel, making sure that people know at the end of the day, it's one thing to be loved here by those that we love, but the greatest love in the whole world is having a vibrant relationship with God in Christ. Gary, give us a recap about why you wrote the book and the essence of love, what it's all about. And by the way, hope you and Karolyn had a great day yesterday on Valentine's Day. Hope you grabbed a dinner or something, Gary.

Gary Chapman: We did. We did.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I don't know what her love language... Well, we're going to talk about her love language in just a moment.

Gary Chapman: Tim, I wrote this book because, first of all, for myself, I just wanted to reflect upon the hands of God through my life. But the other reason I was motivated to write it is I really believe that, from generation to generation, we can impact people, and writing is one of the ways we do that. And that's why, in the book, I encourage other older adults like me to write down some things about your life that you can share with your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren through the years. It might never be published, but it can still pass from one to one in your family. So that was my motivation to try to, with my life, let others see the hand of God, both in my struggles and my weaknesses, God being faithful to accomplish His purposes in my life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What a story God has written in and through you and your wife, Karolyn, and your family with this message, *The Five Love Languages*, which has touched people all over the globe, some 20-plus million copies in print, et cetera. But Gary, as we talk, what we're sharing and for our listeners out there is we're looking at what is that back-water narrative that really is behind everything that has happened on this journey and how God has weaved this story together. Yesterday, we talked about Gary's personal relationship with God in Christ, how he accepted Christ as a boy, age 10. Told some stories, what it was like growing up. But Gary, I found this fascinating. I didn't know that you wanted to be a missionary. That's what you were thinking God wanted you to do.

Gary Chapman: Yeah. When I went to... In high school, my senior year is when I really sensed that God was leading me into some kind of ministry. And in those days, I only knew there was two things you could do vocationally. You could be a missionary or you could be a pastor. Okay? Well, I envisioned missionaries being in the jungle, and I didn't like snakes. So, I determined that God wanted me to be a pastor. So, I went to Moody Bible Institute, and I took what they call the pastor's course, but Moody had a strong emphasis on missions, and I was exposed to world missions there. And by the time I finished Moody, I really sensed God wants me to go in the mission field, and I knew that you didn't have to work with snakes by that time.

So, when I went to Wheaton College, because Moody was only a three-year school at that time... It was an institute. I went to Wheaton College to get my degree. I majored in anthropology, cultural anthropology, which is a great background for missionary work. And then later, when I went to seminary, I was again thinking about missions all the way. When Karolyn and I got married, we talked missions the whole time. So, I finished my degree at seminary, and then we talked to our mission board, and I told them my vision would be to train nationals in other countries so they can reach their people for Christ. And they said, "Well, that would likely be done in a college or a seminary, so it would be an advantage if you had the PhD degree." I had never thought of that. And Karolyn and I thought, "Well, we only have one child. It'd be easier to go do it now."

So, we went back to seminary three more years, did the PhD degree. And then we formally applied to the mission board and got turned down because Karolyn was having a real health problem, and they said... And we were going to Nigeria in Africa, and they said, "We can't send you." And we were devastated. To be honest with you, I was kind of upset with the mission board, and then I was kind of upset with God. Lord, why did you put this on my heart? Why did you... I just don't get it. So, to make a long story short, we went on, of course, and eventually, I got into counseling when I got into church because people were hurting. I kind of got pushed into counseling, though I had taken a lot of courses.

But then the books came. I started writing out of my college thing, I mean my counseling experience, and the books began to just... I mean, they just flowed. It was an overflow of my counseling. All my writings went that way. Well, then the *Love Languages* took off, of course, and it's been now... I think they said 57 languages it's been published in. Then the other books started being published in other languages.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Incredible.

Gary Chapman: So, they send them to us. And one night, we were opening a box, because we always pray for the country and pray for the book that God will use it in that country. I looked over on the couch, and Karolyn was crying. And I said, "Honey, what's wrong?" And she said, "Nothing's wrong. I'm just remembering we wanted to be missionaries, and now your books are all over the world." And both of us cried.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary, that's a word. That's a word, by the way, of encouragement, I think, to everyone listening today. Gary, my takeaway as I read through the story and as I just listen to you, you're not afraid of hard work. People don't see this piece. They see Dr. Gary Chapman in 20 million books and all that. But Gary, when you were going through school, what people don't know probably is you cleaned toilets. That's how you guys survived.

Gary Chapman: Yeah. That's true.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I worked for a food service. Yeah. I worked six-plus years working for the food service, and Julie and I worked opposite shifts and didn't see each other much, but people don't see that piece. But Gary, what I love as we're working our way down through this, you talked openly about your relationship with Karolyn. Let's go there for a moment. You guys get married. It wasn't easy. As a matter of fact, it was a mess up front. Can you take us into that for a moment?

Gary Chapman: Karolyn and I had dated for over two years. It was a long-distance relationship because she was at another college in another state when I was at Wheaton. In those two years, we were writing back and forth in letters before computers. And in the summer, we did spend the summer back at home, so we could see each other on weekends. But we thought we were prepared for marriage. To be

very honest, we didn't read any books on marriage. I don't know if there were any books. If there were, I didn't know about them. And we didn't get any premarital counseling, and we had one hour with the pastor who married us. But I thought I was mature. I finished college and one year of seminary.

And we got married. And now I know that that in-love experience, which was so euphoric for us, has an average lifespan of two years. We'd been dating longer than that before we got married. I came down pretty soon after the honeymoon, I mean really within a few months after the honeymoon. And I thought, "Man, I don't know. I don't have those feelings anymore," and I was disturbed about it. And then I got negative feelings toward her because we ended up arguing over things. It seemed like we disagreed on everything, and everything we disagreed on we ended up arguing about it. I remember one night in the middle of an argument, it was pouring down rain outside, and she walked out of the door and slammed the door and walked out into the rain. And I woke up and thought, "Oh my, this is bad. When a woman walks out in the rain, it's bad."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. That's not a good day. You better not be in the house when she comes back in.

Gary Chapman: And here was my struggle, because I was in seminary. We went to seminary two weeks after we got married, and I was studying to minister to people, and I'm thinking, "God, there is no way that I can get up in front of people and preach hope to people and be this miserable in my marriage. I don't know what to do. I mean, I've done everything I know to do. It's not getting any better. And I don't know. I don't know how this can work." And I finally said to God, "Please, if there's anything else I can do, something's got to happen." And as soon as I said that, there came to my mind a visual image of Jesus on his knees washing the feet of His disciples. And I heard God say to my heart, "That's the problem in your marriage. You do not have the attitude of Christ toward your wife." It hit me like a ton of bricks, because I remember what Jesus said when He stood up. He washed their feet. He stood up and said to his disciples, "I am your leader, and in my kingdom, this is the way you lead. The leader serves."

Three questions made this practical. One is to her, "Honey, what can I do to help you?" And the second one is, "How can I make your life easier?" And the third is, "How can I be a better husband?" And when I was willing to ask those questions, she was willing to give me answers. Looking back on that, her answers were telling me how to love her. And when I started doing those things, it didn't happen overnight, but within three months, my wife started asking me those three questions. How can I help you? How can I make your life easier? How can I be a better wife? Now we're on the road to learning how to serve each other, which I believe is one of the huge factors in having a healthy marriage. He's reaching out to serve her. She's reaching out to serve him, and together now they can accomplish the things God had in mind for them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary, you saw her in her brokenness and realized she was broken like you were. You made her feel safe. In other words, you engaged her, which by the way, helped soothe her. And then it was all about showing up and saying, "God, work in my life to let her know how much I love her and help us fix this, God." Gary, I want to talk about then the five love languages, because in this moment, God starts doing a work in your heart. Isn't it something how your faith, the faith that began as a boy, and you can see that narrative flowing through, challenges you and pushes you? How does Christ love the church, and how should I be loving her? So, Gary, take us and just unpack the five love languages real quick and where it came from. You talked about those three questions. But the five love languages, where'd that come from?

Gary Chapman: Tim, let me just say this. I think before I answer that, I think the pain that Karolyn and I went through, no question about it, God used that to give me a heart years later for counseling. *The Five Love Languages* grew out of my counseling, in which in my office over and over and over again, couples would say, or one of them would say, "I just feel like he doesn't love me or she doesn't love me." And the other one would say, "Well, I don't understand that. I do this and this and this and this. Why wouldn't you feel loved?" And I realized they were sincere, but the other person wasn't getting it.

So, what I did, Tim, I really sat down one day... After years of this, I sat down and read several years of notes that I made when I was counseling and asked myself, when someone said, "I feel like my spouse doesn't love me," what did they want? What were they complaining about? And their answers fell into five categories, and I later called them the five love languages, and I started using that in my counseling. If you want her to feel loved, you've got to learn to express love in her love language. And if you want him to feel loved, you've got to do the same for him. And I would help them discover each other's love language, challenge them to go home and try it. Sometimes they would come back in three weeks and say, "Gary, this is changing everything. I mean, it's very different in our house now."

And then I started using it with groups of couples, sharing the concept and challenging them to go home and try it. And probably five years later, I thought, "If I could put this concept in a book, write it in the language of a common person, maybe I could help a lot of couples I would never have time to see in my office." So that's what motivated me to write the book.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary, when you think about the divorce rate and then you think about what's happening behind closed doors for couples who are trying to keep their hands clasped and keep it together, but pretty empty, pretty loveless, and they're just praying for a better day, it's a sad place to be. And then the heart cry, "I just want someone to love me." And Gary, pressing into that, boy, if you can just crack that door a little bit, what hope begins to flood, because God wired us again that way. Gary, I want to talk about, in your book, you talk about your children, Shelley and Derek, and the lessons they taught you. And I think this is

fascinating because in parenting, the love languages come alive too. Tell us about their influence on this journey now that you're on.

Gary Chapman: Yeah. Tim, most of the time, we think about the parental influence on children, but the fact is we are influenced by our children in positive and negative ways.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh, yeah.

Gary Chapman: Our two children were very, very different. In fact, I wrote a book some time ago called *Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Became Parents*. And one of those things I wish I'd known is that children will be very different. No two children are alike. Our daughter was always very focused, and I learned a lot from her because when she was eight years old, I think, she said, "When I get big, I'm going to be a doctor." And her mother said, "Well, honey, yeah, if that's what God wants, that'd be wonderful." Well, she never changed. I mean, high school, she took three years of chemistry and three years of Latin. She went right on to be a doctor. Now she delivers high-risk babies, and loves it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Gary Chapman: And our son would never focus. I mean, he was into this and that and the other thing, and he was very musical and artistic. And he said, "Shelley's so focused. She's going to miss out on a lot of life." Well, I learned something about both of them. There is value in focus, and my life has been rather focused as I look back on it. And yet, we've got to be flexible. And there's a value in being flexible and not being so rigid, because sometimes those of us who are very organized people, we miss out on some opportunities that God kind of puts in front of us, but we're so focused on what we think we ought to be doing that we miss out on them. So, I've learned from both of my children and learned also to let them be who they are and who God has made them to be. Both of them are passionate for Jesus, obviously, which is the most important thing. But yeah, I think letting children be who they are and learning something from those children are important for parents.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary, we often hear the statement, "I love my kids the same. I want them to feel equally loved, and so I love them the same way." But in some respects, that's a very dangerous statement because if you are loving them exactly the same, you're not paying attention to their uniqueness, and you can have one child feel very loved and the other child not feel so loved. Gary, big lesson out of love languages, right?

Gary Chapman: Yeah. And I had a couple say to me some time ago, said, "Before we read your book on children and how the love languages work with children, we had two daughters. They were just a year apart. So, we would go on a trip, and we would come home, and we would buy each of them the same gift, like a teddy bear, just different colors. And one of the little girls would just, 'Oh, thank you so much,' and she was just so grateful. And the other daughter would just say,

'Well, thank you,' and she'd throw it over on the bed, and that was it. And we thought she was ungrateful until we read your book, because what she would do after we got home and we got the gift and she threw it on the bed, she'd want to sit down and said, 'Show me your pictures. Show me your pictures.' She wanted quality time, and we didn't understand that. We just thought she was ungrateful. Then we read the book, and oh, her love language is quality time. The other love language is gifts."

So yes, learning a child's love language is important. I say to parents, the question is not do you love your children? The question is do your children feel loved? And if you don't discover and speak their primary language, they will not feel loved even though, yes, you love them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary, I remember an interview the two of us were doing together, and it was around parenting and love languages. And I asked you a question that I want to punctuate here for our listeners today. And that is, you said, "Tim, you need to be careful that you don't discipline in the child's love language because it can be seen as harsh and hurtful." Boy, I'll tell you what. I took a gasp of air for a moment and thought about that. If my child's love language is time and they want me, and then my discipline is I'm giving them time out and sending them upstairs for an hour and I disconnect with them, Gary, there's something to that that could be extremely hurtful, right?

Gary Chapman: That is severe discipline of that child, and it communicates to them, "I'm not loved." The same thing is true with words. If words of affirmation is their language and they break the rules or you get upset with them, and so you lash out at them with harsh words and whatever you say is harsh and anger, it's like a dagger in that kid's heart. I mean, it's like killing that kid. So yeah, that's a huge insight for parents to understand, because parents typically discipline the way they were disciplined. They don't think about it. They just discipline however they were disciplined as a child, but we need to think about how we discipline a child. That's one reason why I suggest, when you make a rule, decide the consequences at the same time you make the rule, and let everybody know about it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary, I remember, as a result of that conversation, I wound up starting to take time out with my son, Zach, because he hated it. He hated going into time out and being alone. And so, I said, "Okay, I'll tell you what. Dad and Zach are in time out together." And he didn't like that either, but I tell you what, Gary, it was very powerful, very instructive for me as a dad. Gary, I know we've just got a few minutes left, and I'd like to close this way. I was thinking about I wonder what the five love languages are like in the Chapman home between you and your wife, your love language, her love language, and how you guys just kind of focus on this. And then as you look at this season of life, what do you pray and asking God to do for such a time as this?

Gary Chapman: Yeah. My wife's language is acts of service, and mine is words of affirmation. And we didn't either one of us do those in the early days of our marriage. That

was part of the problem, looking back on it. So, before I came to the office to do this interview with you this morning, I unloaded the dishwasher. I took out the trash. I vacuumed the floor, not this morning, but in our house, I vacuum the floors, and I always load the dishwasher and do the dishes after she cooks. I cannot cook. She cooks, and I do all the dishes and pots and pans and clean up every night, every night that she cooks. We do go out once in a while. But I speak her love language. She tells me, Tim, that I am the greatest husband in the world. Now, I know that is hyperbole, but it feels good to me.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh, I like that. Yes. That's so beautiful.

Gary Chapman: As far as my desires for the future, people have asked me... Because I officially retired from our church back in July but they let me keep my office and let me keep my assistant. So, I'm still working every single day because I love what I do. But people ask me, "What's on your bucket list?" And I say, "Well, if you mean places I want to go or do or what," I say, "I don't really have a bucket list." I say, "But if you want me to have one, there's one thing I would put in it. I just want to accomplish whatever God has in mind for me the rest of my life. He's led me in the past, and I just want to accomplish whatever is on His docket for me. When He's through, I'm through. Okay? I don't have any plans other than to try to follow His plans for my life however long that is."

And I would hope that programs like you are doing and what Dr. Dobson does and so many others around the country, I would hope that God would continue to use people like us and others in different fields, and that in our country, people would turn to God for help. Right now, we're not looking the right direction. We're looking to the world. Just do what you want to do. Everything's okay. Listen, God gave us principles because they're good for us. And if He said, don't do it, you're better off not to do it. If He said do it, you're going to be better to do it. So, I'm just hoping that we can have a turning in our country back to God and looking to Him to guide our lives as well as give us eternal life and a relationship with Him.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary, what a delightful conversation, so inspiring and encouraging. And as we close out the broadcast today, I wanted to say a special word to those of you who might be hurting. You or someone you love might be going through a difficult time. Maybe you don't feel loved, or maybe you feel very alone. We'd love to let you know that you are loved and especially loved by God. Feel free to call our toll free number. That number is (877) 732-6825. We'd love a moment just to encourage you and strengthen your heart. As always, thanks for listening.

Roger Marsh: Well, I hope you've enjoyed listening to Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Dr. Gary Chapman over the past couple of days. Dr. Chapman really has a great ministry for the Lord with his *Love Languages* books and the marriage counseling that he offers to couples at his home church in North Carolina. He is humble and soft-spoken, as you could tell, but he has made a huge impact in countless lives.

Now, if you missed part one of Dr Chapman's conversation with Dr. Clinton we shared on yesterday's program or any of today's broadcast, just go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/podcast. Or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. We have team members ready to answer your call and to show you how you can listen to any of our past broadcasts or to get involved in the ministry of the JDFI. Again, the number to call is (877) 732-6825. Well, that's all the time we have for today. Thanks for listening, and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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