

Dive Deep Interview with Dr. Gary Chapman

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Jill Savage: Welcome to No More Perfect Date Night. This is Mark and Jill Savage, and we are so excited for this month's Dive Deep interview. We have Dr. Gary Chapman joining us, and Dr. Gary Chapman is the author of many books, but probably one of his most well known book is *The Five Love Languages*. So welcome, Dr. Chapman.

Mark Savage: Welcome.

Dr. Gary Chapman: Well, thank you, Jill, Mark. Good to be with you.

Jill Savage: Absolutely, now tell us a little bit about yourself. How long have you been married and tell us a little of your story.

Dr. Chapman: Carolyn and I have been married 56 years. Now she's only 48, so she can't figure how that happened, but it's true.

[laughter]

Mark Savage: Wow.

Jill Savage: I love it. Wow, 56 years. You inspire us.

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: Well, I got married when I was nine also.

Jill Savage: Oh did you?

Mark Savae: Well, I wondered, you look so young, so great.

[laughter]

Jill Savage: I love it. How did you and Carolyn meet?

Speaker 3: We actually grew up in the same church. In high school we double dated. I dated her best girlfriend, she dated another guy, but we often went together. I never dated her till I was a senior in college and went home for a holiday and saw her at church and asked myself, "How did I miss her?" [chuckle] So we started talking and started actually what came a two-year letter writing relationship. This was before computers, okay? [chuckle]

Jill Savage: Right.

Dr. Chapman: Finally after two years of letter writing we thought, "We ought to get together, and let's see if this really should go to marriage." So I moved back to North Carolina, I finished college, I did a seminary year there. She changed colleges and came back to a college near home, so every weekend we would go back to our parents and we'd spend the weekends. So we had a year before we finally got married at the end of that summer.

Jill Savage: Wow, that's crazy...and neat. Kinda reminds us of our son and his fiancé. They're getting married in about six weeks and they started dating right before college, and so they've really spent a lot of weekend dating and visiting each other, but also a lot of communicating from a distance. Of course, not so much letter writing but doing that through different means. So it's neat. I love that.

We really would love to spend today looking at this whole concept of love languages. Tell us a little bit about how you came upon the concept of love languages. I know for Mark and I when we talk in our *No More Perfect Marriages* book about the slow fades, that happened because we were healing from our crisis eight years ago or so and we kept referring to, "Oh, that's our slow fade of disagreeing, and that's our slow fade of avoiding emotion." We were using this language internally when we fell upon it and then we thought, "Wow, other couples need to know this." How did the concept of love languages actually happen for you?

Dr. Chapman: Yeah, it happened over a period of time, I was involved in marriage counseling with couples and I never forget the first time I encountered this concept, this idea that what makes one person feel loved doesn't make another person feel loved. It was a couple that had been married for 30 years. I didn't know them at all and the wife sat down and she said, "Dr. Chapman, let me just tell you first of all, before we start, that we don't argue, we don't believe in arguing, we don't have any money problems." And she went on with two or three more positive things and I was asking myself, "Did they come in here to tell me what a good marriage they have?"

[laughter]

Dr. Chapman: But then she started crying and she said, "The problem is Dr. Chapman, I just don't feel any love coming from him. We're like two roommates living in the same house. He does his thing, I do my thing. There's nothing going on between us." And she said, "I just feel empty."

I looked at him and he said, "I don't understand her. I do everything I can to show her that I love her." And I said, "Well, what? What do you do?" He said, "Well, I get home from work before she does." So he said, "I start the evening meal." And he said, "When she gets home, if I haven't finished, she'll help me. And then after we eat," he said, "I wash the dishes." And he said, "Every Thursday night I vacuum the floor and on Saturday, I wash the car and mow the grass and help her with the laundry," and he went on. I was beginning to wonder, "What does this woman do?"

[laughter]

Dr. Chapman: It sounded to me like he was doing everything. Well, he finished that. I looked back at her and she said, "Dr. Chapman, he's right. He's a hard-working man." She said, "But we don't ever talk." She said, "He's always mowing the grass, washing the dishes, vacuuming the floors. We don't ever talk." So it dawned on me, here's a sincere husband who's doing everything he knows to

do to show his wife that he loves her and a wife who doesn't get it. And after that encounter I heard similar stories over and over in my office, and I knew there had to be a pattern to this and I had no idea what it was, but eventually I took time to sit down and read several years of notes that I made when I was counseling people and asked myself the question. "When someone said in my office, '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 so I later called them the five love languages and started using the concept in my counseling.

And I would try to help couples understand that if you want her to feel love, or him to feel love, you have to express it in a way that's meaningful to them. You have to speak their love language. And couples would come back after three weeks sometimes, and just say, "Gary, this is changing everything. The whole climate is different now in our relationship." So then I started using it in small groups, and the same thing happened. And it was probably five years later when I thought, "If I could put this concept in a book, write it in the language of the common person, maybe I could help a lot of couples I would never have time to see in my office." Of course little did I know the book would sell now over 11 million copies in English and be translated in 50 languages around the world.

Mark Savage: Wow!

Jill Savage: Wow! Amazing.

Dr. Chapman: That's where it came from and God has obviously used it to help a lot of couples learn how to connect or sometimes reconnect emotionally with each other.

Jill Savage: Yes. Oh, my goodness. Well, I know for us, it was a game changer.

Mark Savage: Yeah. It was because we were the same way-- loving each other based upon the way that we wanted or thought and it obviously wasn't what each other needed.

Jill Savage: I remember we would say, "It's like you're speaking French to me, and I'm speaking German to you."

[laughter]

Dr. Chapman: Yeah. And that's the way all of us are. We tend to speak to the other person what will make *us* feel loved. For example, my love language, I didn't know it at the time when we got married, of course, but my love language is "words of affirmation." So what did I do when we got married? I gave my wife words. I told her how nice she looked, how much I appreciated what she did. I told her a dozen times a day, "I love you, honey. I'm so glad I married you, I love you." But her love language, I didn't know it, her love language was acts of service. When I was in graduate school, I wasn't doing much to help her. And one night she said, "You know, honey, you keep on saying 'I love you, I love you.' If you love me, why don't you help me?"

[laughter]

Dr. Chapman: And I'm blown out of this battle. Because in my mind, I love her. In her mind, if I loved her, I would be helping her. So, I wish we'd have known this in the early days of our

marriage. [chuckle]

Mark Savage: Sure.

Jill Savage: Yeah. It would have made life so much easier, wouldn't it?

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Jill Savage: So let's just take some time to dive into the love languages. Do you mind doing that? Where we can just look at each one and you can give us some highlights, some things to understand better about those? And we will make sure that we have the link over to the love languages tests. So if you are watching this and you've never taken the love language evaluation, we'll link over to that. You can take it online, and then you'll be able to even apply what Dr. Chapman is sharing with us in a more personal way.

Mark Savage: Right.

Dr. Chapman: Yeah, that would be great.

Jill Savage: Okay.

Dr. Chapman: One of the love languages, these are in no particular order, but one is "words of affirmation." Using words to affirm the other person. "You look nice in that outfit, really appreciate what you did, all the things I like about you are..." It's using words to affirm the other person. Not long ago, a lady said to me, she said, "Dr. Chapman, I know it would be good if I could give my husband some positive words." She said, "but to be honest with you, I can't think of anything good to say about the man."

[laughter]

Jill Savage: Oh, my!

Mark Savaeg: Uh-oh!

Dr. Chapman: And I said, "Well, does he ever take a shower?" And she said, "Well, yes." I said, "Well, how often?" She said, "Well, everyday." I said, "If I were you, I'd start there." "Honey, I appreciate you taking a shower."

[laughter]

Dr. Chapman: I've never met a man, never met a woman, you couldn't find something good to say about them. And you see, when you give your spouse a positive word, there's something inside of him that wants to be better. You give them a critical word, there's something inside that either wants to shoot you or run, one or the other. So words are powerful and to some people, this is their love language.

A second love language is "gifts." It's universal to give and receive gifts as an expression of love. My academic background before I studied counseling and theology was anthropology, the study of

cultures. We've never found a culture where gift-giving is not an expression of love. It's universal. The gift says, "They were thinking about me. Look what they got for me." The gift doesn't have to be expensive. We've always said, "It's the thought that counts." But it's not the thought left in your head that counts, it's the gift that came out of the thought in your head [chuckle]

Mark Savage: Absolutely.

Dr. Chapman: I say to guys, most of the year, or at least a part of the year, depending on where you live, you can get free flowers. Just go out in your backyard and pick one.

Jill Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: It's what the kids do. Many mothers have received dandelions from their kids. Now, to the guys I say, "I'm not suggesting dandelions, okay?" [chuckle] But if you don't have any flowers in your backyard, your neighbor's yard, ask them, they'll give you a flower.

Jill Savage: Yes. That's great. That reminds me of a time that we were at Aldi, and we were in line behind a couple, and she looks over and Aldi flowers are \$3.99 for a bouquet. She looks over and she says to her husband, "Oh, look at those flowers! Aren't those flowers beautiful?" And he said, "I thought you didn't like flowers?" [laughter] She said, "I do like flowers. I just don't like you to spend lots of money on flowers." And about that time she realized she'd forgotten something. She said, "Oh. I gotta run back and get it." So, she runs back and he looks at Mark like, "She's nuts." And I said, "My guess is that she really does like flowers, and she likes those flowers because they're \$3.99." And he says, "She is so confusing! Women are so confusing." And Mark says, "It's a lifetime journey, buddy."

[laughter]

Dr. Chapman: Did he buy the flowers?

Mark Savage: He did.

Dr. Chapman: Alright.

Mark Savage: She was pumped.

[laughter]

Mark Savage: I had to learn that myself from Jill.

Jill Savage: Yeah.

Mark Savage: She likes flowers, but not \$50 a bouquet.

Dr. Chapman: Yeah. Right. [chuckle]

Jill Savage: Great. So, that's wonderful. We've got words of affirmation, and then we have gifts.

Dr. Chapman: Gifts, and then "acts of service." Doing something for your spouse that you know they would like for you to do. It could be cooking a meal. That's a huge act of service, cooking a meal. Washing dishes, vacuuming floors, getting white spots off the mirror, cleaning the toilet, walking the dog, washing the car, mowing the grass, changing the baby's diaper. [chuckle] Big act of service. [chuckle]

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: Anything that you know your spouse would like for you to do. Remember the old saying, "Actions speak louder than words." It's true for these people. It's not true for everyone, but if this is their love language, then actions will speak louder than words.

So, number four is "quality time." Giving your spouse your undivided attention. I do not mean sitting on the couch watching television because someone else has your attention. I'm talking about sitting on the couch with the TV off, looking at each other and talking to each other, or taking a walk down the road and talking, or going out to eat assuming that you talk. [chuckle] If you've ever noticed in a restaurant, you can almost always tell the difference between dating couples and married couples. Dating couples will look at each other and talk. Married couples sit there and eat, [chuckle] or they get on their phone and they're texting somebody else while they're sitting with their spouse.

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: Quality time means you give them your undivided attention. TVs off, computers down, phones down, we're looking at each other, talking to each other.

And then number five is "physical touch." We've all known the emotional power of physical touch. In a marriage, this would be such things as holding hands, kissing, embracing, the whole sexual part of marriage, arm around the shoulder, riding down the road, you put your hand on their leg, sitting around the house and they walk by and you trip them. [laughter] I'm kidding on the last one, okay? Don't trip your spouse. [laughter]

So, the simple message is that out of the five, each of us has a primary love language. One of the five speaks more deeply to us emotionally than the other four. Now, we can receive love in all five, but if we had to give up one we'd give up this one, maybe this one, but not this one. This is the one that really makes me feel loved.

Jill Savage: Right.

Dr. Chapman: It's very similar to spoken language. Every one of us grows up speaking a language with a dialect, and that's the one we understand best. We call it our native tongue. I grew up speaking English, Southern style. Okay? [chuckle]

Jill Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: But everyone grows up speaking a language with a dialect. Same thing is true with love. And seldom does a husband and wife have the same love language. It happens, but not very often. And even if they have the same language, they'll have a different dialect within the language.

For example a lady said to me just recently she said, "My husband and I have the same language. It's acts of service." I said, "Well, that's wonderful. It should be easier for you." And she said, "Well, the only thing is the things I want him to do to show love to me are different from the things he wants me to do to show love to him." So, it's the same language, but it's different dialects. So, you have to learn. There's a learning curve for everyone of us, and the key is to learn to speak the other person's language, not your language. Not what makes you feel loved, but what makes them feel loved.

Jill Savage: And what is the best way to do that, Dr. Chapman? Because that's really foreign territory for most of us. We're traveling into a place that we don't really understand.

Dr. Chapman: Yeah. You're exactly right. So, the first step is to learn your own love language, and let your spouse learn their own love language because most people haven't thought in these terms before. And there's two or three informal ways. Now, you mentioned one way. You can go online, and you're gonna give the link to that, and take a free quiz and it will tell you what your primary love language is.

But here's two or three simple things you can do. Number one, observe your own behavior. How do you typically respond to other people? If you're always patting people on the back, or giving high fives or hugging people, physical touch is probably your language. Or if you're always giving gifts to people, or if you're the kind of person that likes to sit down with a friend like a lady, sit down with another lady and spend an hour and a half or two hours at lunch, that's quality time.

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: Look at your own behavior. How do you respond to other people? And then secondly, what do you complain about most often? The complaint reveals the love language. If you say to your spouse, "You know we just don't spend any time together anymore. I feel like we're two ships passing in the night." You're communicating that your love language is quality time. Or if you say to your spouse, "I don't think you would ever touch me if I didn't initiate it." You're telling them that your love language is physical touch. Or if you go on a business trip and you come home and your spouse says, "You didn't bring me anything?" [chuckle] They're telling you, gifts is their language. We tend to get defensive if our spouse complains about something. If a wife says to a husband, we don't spend any time together, he may well say, "What do you mean? We went out to dinner Thursday night." [chuckle]

Jill Savage: Right.

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: But the reality is, the complaint is really revealing the love language. And then the third question is, "What do I request most often? What does my spouse request most often?" If we're periodically saying, "Honey can we take a walk after dinner?" We're asking for quality time. If we say before you go on a business trip, "Be sure and bring me a surprise." [chuckle] We're requesting a gift. Or if we say, "Honey could you give me back rub?" We're asking for physical touch. If you put those three things together, observe, for either you or your spouse, observe behavior. What do we complain about? And what do we request most often? You can figure out your love language pretty quickly.

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Jill Savage: Yeah, that's so true.

Mark Savage: Yeah. So Jill's really been asking for us to take nightly walks together. And I want to say that I've been a willing participant in that, but I haven't. So now I need to reevaluate.

[laughter]

Jill Savage: Yeah. Thanks for that small counselling session there, Dr. Chapman. [laughter] We know our love languages and mine is quality time, but I had not equated taking a walk to quality time...

Dr. Chapman: Taking a walk, yeah.

Jill Savage: Yeah. I really hadn't even thought about it.

Mark Savage: I hadn't either.

Jill Savage: So yeah, that's great. That's very helpful. Now, as with anything, all good things also have a dark side sometimes. Is there anything with love languages that we should be careful about or aware of as we think about this in our marriage?

Dr. Chapman: Well here is one of the most important things to recognize, and that is, the opposite of your spouse's love language will hurt them extremely difficult, deeply. Let's say, if your language is physical touch, and your spouse pushes you or slaps at you, man, that strikes at your heart; that's like a dagger in your heart. Or if words is your love language, and your spouse gives you critical, angry, and harsh words, again, that hurts you more deeply than anything else would hurt you. If gifts is your language and your spouse gets mad at you and takes a gift away from you that they gave you, that's like abandoning them. It's horrible.

So, whatever the love language of the spouse is, when you do the opposite of that, you are hurting them extremely deeply. And you make yourself think, "Why would they be upset about that? I was just angry at the moment." Well, yeah, you were angry at the moment, but you drove a sword in their heart. And that's where you really need to learn how to apologize. I mean in sack cloth and ashes. [chuckle] You need to learn how to apologize. "I am so sorry, honey. I realize I hurt you so deeply."

Sometimes I say that there's two essentials to a long-term healthy marriage. One is, you have to learn how to speak each other's love language, and thus stay connected emotionally. But the other is, we have to deal effectively with our failures, because none of us are perfect. And that means, we have to learn how to apologize, and we have to choose how to forgive. You won't have a long-term healthy marriage if you're not willing to apologize when you fail, and the other person's not willing to forgive you. So, these two things kind of go together.

Jill Savage: Right.

Mark Savage: Yeah. Well those are just really great words, especially the forgiveness part that we have to keep cleaning up our messes with one another because we're going to make them.

Dr. Chapman: Yeah. Absolutely.

Jill Savage: Yeah. I know for us, one of the things we realized is that, we were for many years, offering half apologies. And we defined a half apology as, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I said I was sorry." Usually has some attitude to it sometimes. But, "I'm sorry, will you please forgive me?" really brings that closure. And especially if you can specifically say what you are sorry for. It really brings closure to pain in marriage.

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: Yeah. The words, "I'm sorry," should never be used alone. Tell them what you're sorry for and don't throw in a, "But."

Jill Savage: Yep.

Dr. Chapman: "I'm sorry that I lost my temper and yelled at you, but if you had not, then I would not." And now, you're no longer apologizing, you're blaming them for your poor behavior. So I say to couples, "If you simply say to your spouse, 'I'm sorry,' they're probably thinking, 'You certainly are, is there anything else you'd like to say?'" [chuckle] They think they've apologized. You think they're giving a character report.

Jill Savage: Yes.

[laughter]

Jill Savage: Wow. Now that's good. That is very wise.

Mark Savage: Right.

Jill Savage: So appreciative. Yeah. This has been very powerful. Just to be reminded, like I said, we've heard you speak, we've read the book, we've been practicing love languages, and yet it's so easy to just get a little bit off center. Or to forget, how that is working in your relationship, and so this has been a good reminder for us.

Dr. Chapman: Yeah. Once you discover each other's love language and you're conscious of this, you really need to somehow keep it on the front burner. Put a post-it stamp at work that her love language is, his love language is, and then it could be a learning curve. Like, if you didn't receive words of affirmation growing up and then you get married and realize your spouse's language is words of affirmation, you're gonna have to learn, it's gonna take you some time to work on this. Sometimes men say to me, "Dr. Chapman, I just can't say those words to my wife, 'you look nice or I love you,' I just can't say those words." I said, "Okay, get your little notebook and you write down things you hear other husbands say to their wives, write them down, or maybe you read them in a book, write them down, stand in front of the mirror, read them out loud so you hear yourself saying these things, then pick out one of them and walk into the room where your wife is, when she's looking the other way and you say one of them and run."

[laughter]

Dr. Chapman: "And you broke the silence. The second time will be easier, the third time will be easier," but it is a learning curve. People for example who weren't touched growing up, they just say, "I'm not a toucher, just not a toucher, not a toucher, I'm just... I'm not a toucher." "Okay, I understand that, so let's just start by putting your hand on their shoulder. You can just put your hand on their shoulder, yeah, it's okay." Yeah. And we learn, we learn, we take baby steps. The good news is any one of these love languages can be learned as an adult even if you did not receive them as a child. Don't use that as a cop-out; let's get on board here. If you wanna have a close, intimate, encouraging relationship, you need to learn how to speak the other person's love language, and if you do and do it consistently, you'll find that marriage is what you wanted it to be when you got married, loving...

Jill Savage: Right. You also made me think about one of the learning curves we had and maybe you can expound upon this a little bit, is that my secondary love language is physical touch and closeness, but in our early years of marriage every physical touch that seemed to come from Mark had a sexual innuendo.

Mark Savage: What's wrong with that?

[laughter]

Jill Savage: And so, I kind of almost turned off my need, kinda shut off my love language, because it just felt like it always had an expectation. Can we do that maybe from our childhood imprint or from the dynamics in our marriage, can we shut that off in ourselves?

Dr. Chapman: I think we can, and I'll just say this, because a lot of men will hear what I've just said, the five love languages, and they automatically say, "Oh, my love language is physical touch." And what they mean is sexual intercourse. And I say, "Well, let me ask you a couple of questions, do non-sexual touches make you feel loved?" Well, first they look at me like a deer in a headlight, "Are there non-sexual touches?" [chuckle] I say, "Well, let's say this, let's say you get out of the car, you're walking into a shopping mall, and your wife reaches over and holds your hand, does that make you feel loved?" And if he says, "Not really," I say, "Okay. Let's say that she's pouring a cup of coffee, and she puts her hand on your shoulder, does that make you feel loved?"

And if he says, "Not really." I say, "Then your love language is not physical touch; you like sex, but that's not your love language, okay?" And we know there's a difference between men and women...

Mark Savage: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Chapman: Sexually, that we're very, very different. That's another whole topic, but I think yes, I think for the wife, even though physical touch may be pleasant to her, if it's always attached to sexual intercourse, then yes, she can begin to draw back from that because she feels like you're manipulating her; you're just trying to force her into something that maybe she's not ready for at that particular time. So, I think we have to recognize those dynamics.

Jill Savage: Right.

Mark Savage: Yeah. I had to learn the whole non-sexual touch thing and...

Jill Savage: He was like, non-sexual and touch, they go together?

[laughter]

Mark Savage: Who thought of that?

[laughter]

Mark Savage: But it's been powerful for me to realize that my expectations and demands were crushing Jill, and I didn't want to do that. So I had to learn... And it is hard work, but as guys we gotta man up and do what's hard as we've said, we've got to work through awkward to get to a new normal, and it is awkward, but it's doable.

Dr. Chapman: You're exactly right. And I think a lot of men don't realize that the female's desire for sexual intimacy is far more tied to her emotions. If she doesn't feel loved by you, she does not have much interest in being intimate with you. And that's why the love language is so important to the sexual relationship. If he will speak her love language with acts of service... In fact a guy said to me the other day, said, "Dr. Chapman, man, this is blowing my mind." He said, "I read your book and my wife read it and we took the quiz and her love language is acts of service, and she told me the other day that when I take the trash out she finds that sexy." He said, "Dr. Chapman, nobody ever told me that." He said, "If I'd have known that, I'd have been taking the trash out three times a day."

[laughter]

Mark Savage: I know.

Jill Savage: I love it.

Dr. Chapman: The love languages is important to the sexual part of the marriage; if he's speaking her love language she's far more likely to want to be intimate with him.

Mark Savage: Yep.

Jill Savage: Mm-hmm. So true.

Mark Savage: That's so true, Jill says that emptying the dishwasher is foreplay.

Dr. Chapman: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

[laughter]

Jill Savage: That's great, well, this has been a great conversation, it really has. We want to thank you so much for joining us.

Mark Savage: Yeah, thank you for your time.

Jill Savage: And we have one other question, we try to end all of our interviews this way, we'd love to know if you and Carolyn have a favorite date night? When you have a date night, is there something that you particularly enjoy doing?

Dr. Chapman: The most common, and, therefore, I think the one that really appreciate most, is having dinner together. We're going, going, going... Now we eat at home. She cooks, my Carolyn cooks. So we have meals at home, and that's where we talk, is after the meal. Our kids are gone now, and so we talk after the evening meal, before I wash the dishes, okay?

[laughter]

But we go out one night a week and we go to different restaurants and that's just a special time for us because we're away from home, we're... I should say we're away from people, we're not away from people, 'cause people all around you, but it's an opportunity for us to sit there and talk in a nice setting and enjoy each other. So, there are other things we do, of course, but I think that's the most common and the one that we both appreciate most.

Mark Savage: Wow, so good.

Jill Savage: I love that, yeah. Well, we want to thank you.

Mark Savage: Yes, thank you.

Jill Savage: It's been great to have the conversation and I know that our No More Perfect Date Night members are going to just be so encouraged by what you've shared today.

Mark Savage: Yeah.

Dr. Chapman: Well, thank you, it's good to be with you. I appreciate what you guys are doing. Keep up the good work, okay?

Mark Savage: Yeah, thank you. Thank you so much.

Jill Savage: This is Mark and Jill Savage and we are signing off with a reminder that a real marriage isn't perfect, a real marriage is two people being perfected.

Mark Savage: Yep.

Jill Savage: Thanks for joining us.