

Four Pillars of Unity Respect, Understanding

In the previous chapter we began to look at building the house of oneness. We pointed out that Jesus Christ must be the foundation for our families and that there is no other foundation upon which we can build a godly home. Upon this foundation there are four pillars that are essential for unity in our marriages and families. The first pillar we looked at was the unconditional love of God. Love is the most enduring of the four pillars we will discuss. The Bible tells us that God's love is everlasting, it endures forever and it never fails. This is the kind of love everyone is looking for in life. God wants to pour this love into our hearts so that we can love our family members in this way.

The second pillar we discussed was the pillar of trust. Trust, as we mentioned, is the most fragile of the four and it can be easily broken. Once trust is broken, it is very hard to restore it. Trust takes time to develop and it must be both given, as well as, earned. Trust requires honesty, and any deception or dishonesty will destroy trust in a relationship. To build trust we must emphasize being faithful and being true to our word. We must keep our promises and let our yes be yes and our no be no.

In this chapter we want to turn our attention to the remaining two pillars that support the house of oneness.

Respect/Honor: Pillar C

The third pillar that holds up the house of oneness is respect. Whereas love is the most enduring, and trust is the most fragile, respect is often the most neglected pillar, especially in Western cultures. Respect is the acknowledgment of another person's worth or value. Respect is conveyed to someone as we value his or her opinion, feelings and ideas. We live in an age where there is a growing epidemic of what people call "low self esteem." More books have been written about "self image" in the last few years, than almost any other topic. People are desperately trying to improve their self-esteem and feel better about themselves.

Unfortunately, much of the current focus on self-esteem is misdirected. It is impossible to affirm our own value by looking in the mirror and repeating to ourselves that we are valuable and important. Our value is confirmed to us, more by the way other people treat us, than by the way we "esteem" ourselves. Rather than focusing on a self-image problem, instead we should focus on the issue of respect.

We are losing the grace of treating people with the dignity that God gave each person when He created him or her. We communicate a message that people are worthless and not important when we fail to treat them according to their God-given value. Thus, more people struggle with feeling valuable and worthwhile. Many cultures are reaping the consequence of this breakdown of respect and honor.

The scriptures place a very great emphasis on respecting or honoring one other. We are

admonished to honor our parents (Ephesians 6:2), to honor our leaders (I Timothy 5:17), and to honor the elderly (Leviticus 19:32). Wives are admonished to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33), and husbands are to treat their wives in considerate and respectful ways or their prayers will not be answered. (I Peter 3:7) In fact, the Bible encourages us to honor everyone (Romans 12:10), including the Lord, Himself. (I Timothy 1:17) The restoration of respect and honor in our homes is an essential step toward restoring the dignity of human relationships.

There are different levels of respect that can be given to people.

First of all, respect is given to people because of the position they have. Thus, pastors, elders, presidents, parents, and government officials are respected because they occupy a position of power and influence. A prime minister receives a certain degree of honor just because of his position in the country. This respect is given regardless of his achievements or his character qualities. He may, in fact, be very corrupt, but just because he occupies the position of prime minister, he is respected.

David understood this level of honor very clearly in his relationship with King Saul. David extended honor to King Saul even after the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul. At that time Saul was making godless choices in his life. Saul was still on the throne and had the position of king in Israel, even though the prophet Samuel had anointed David to be the king. David had two opportunities to remove Saul from power, but he would not do so as long as Saul was king. He extended the utmost respect to Saul and refused to do him harm, even though he was encouraged to do so by his fellow countrymen.

Secondly, respect is given to people because of their abilities and achievements. Thus, skilled athletes honored in almost every nation of the world. Some receive great monetary rewards while others are given national fame and recognition for their accomplishments. We place tremendous and unfair pressures on people when we elevate them because of their beauty, their intelligence or their abilities.

Movie stars and super athletes are viewed as heroes, idols, and role models for many young people. In some cultures athletes, for example, command multi-million dollar contracts and companies eagerly seek their endorsements. Children all across the world look up to them and emulate their lives. In the midst of this it is easy to lose perspective. Achievements due to skills alone have very little to do with what life is really all about.

Successful businessmen are also looked up to in many nations and people seek out their opinions because they wish to achieve the same level of success in their own business. Unfortunately, it is possible to be successful in sports, in business, and in politics and yet lack godly character. Someone has said that in our modern world, we have achieved brilliance without conscience. The heroes in the land are often elevated, in spite of their character qualities, rather than because of them.

It is appropriate to respect others for their achievements. We just need to put people's achievements in their proper place. Academic excellence, skillful musical ability, or outstanding athletic ability is certainly worthy of praise and admiration. It is not wrong to express appreciation to those who have done a good job and achieved great success in their field. It is

wrong, however, to place an overemphasis on abilities, especially if it is at the expense of other more important qualities.

Thirdly, respect is given for godly character qualities. We honor someone for his/her integrity and honesty. We respect a person because he/she is faithful, loyal and trustworthy. The Bible says that a good name is to be chosen above riches. (Proverbs 22:1) There is something honorable about godly character qualities. All people are intrinsically valuable, as we shall point out shortly, but not all people demonstrate honorable character. Christian parents need to devote more time and attention to this area.

We are raising our children in an environment that does not emphasize Christian virtues the way God would desire. Our homes need to be places where character is developed and where godliness is emphasized above academic achievements and other successes. We need to discover ways of honoring character development in our children and of encouraging them to emphasize these values in life.

Our son, Jonathan, was a member of high school basketball team during his teenage years. There were several very talented players on the team and they won starting positions. However, they were undisciplined, had poor attitudes toward the coach, and didn't practice very hard. Jonathan was a faithful and hardworking member of the team who always showed up for practice on time. He fostered a good team spirit among the others.

Because he lacked the skills of his classmates, Jonathan rarely got to play in the games. No matter how hard he worked, he only got to play in the last few minutes of a game if the score was no longer close. He struggled with the injustice of seeing some of these undisciplined players getting the coveted starting positions. Jonathan often worked harder than these other players, but he was still denied playing time because of his lower skill level. He voiced his frustration to me on many occasions.

I realized that this basketball experience was an opportunity to disciple my son about the real values in life. Together we began to wrestle with questions such as, "What was real success in life?" "Was it measured by being one of the starting five members of the team?" "Were you successful only if your team won the championship?" "Or, could you be successful by being faithful, humble, working hard work and having a good attitude?"

These are tough issues for young people to wrestle with. It is especially difficult when they grow up in cultures where "image" and position define success. I recognized that honoring the correct values at home would motivate my son to live for something more than the "perishable wreaths" that this present world offers.

Fourthly, and most importantly, respect is to be given to every person just because of his or her intrinsic value. Every human being is worthy of this fundamental level of respect. We need to value and appreciate people because they are unique creations of God. The Bible tells us that God personally formed each individual in the womb. (Psalm 139:13) "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." Everyone, the Bible says, is "fearfully and wonderfully made..." (Psalm 139:14). There are no accidental conceptions or

unwanted births, as far as God is concerned. Each person is special and priceless in the eyes of the Lord. Therefore, every human being, regardless of their position, their age, their gender, their race, their skin color, their religious beliefs, their abilities, their lifestyle choices, or their character qualities, is worthy of equal respect as a creation of God.

God demonstrated how valuable every person is when he sent His Son Jesus Christ to personally die on the cross for each individual. God considers each human being worth the life of His Son. That reality should settle forever any questions you or I may have regarding our worth or value. Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price for you and me. We, not only have created value in the eyes of the Lord, we have redemptive value. Christ did not just die for important people, for rich people, for influential people, for good people, or for privileged people. He died for every human being and, thereby, conferred on each individual, honor and worth.

I am told that in East Africa a young man is required to give a present to the father of the girl he wishes to marry. The expected present is usually one cow in exchange for the daughter. In that culture, the cow is extremely valuable and is a symbol of the value the young man places on the girl that he wishes to marry. If his prospective bride is very special and stands out among the other girls in the village he might need to give the father two cows. If she is the most outstanding girl in the entire village the young man may have to turn over three cows to her father! Three cows would mean she was the most special girl among all the other girls in the area.

There was a father in a particular village that had a daughter who was rather plain and ordinary. She did not have the qualities that attracted young men to her, so her father had not received any inquiries regarding marriage. He, of course, grew increasingly concerned that she would never get married and that he would not get any cows for his family. One day, however, a young man from another village came to visit someone in the village where this father and his daughter lived. During his time there, the young man became interested in this plain, ordinary, girl that no one else wanted. So, he talked to her father and reached an agreement with him to marry his daughter.

The young man then returned to his village, to make preparations for his upcoming wedding to this girl. So the day finally came when he returned to the village for the wedding. Of course, he brought along his gift for her father. He did not bring three cows. He did not bring two cows. He did not bring one cow. To the shock and utter amazement of everyone in the village he brought **TEN** cows! The villagers could not believe it! No one had ever gotten ten cows for their daughter in all the history of the tribe. And yet, here was this young man offering ten cows for a plain, ordinary, girl that no one else was interested in. So she became very famous in that part of the world and everyone referred to her from that day on as The Ten Cow Bride!

They were married and then they left the village to live in the young man's village. They didn't return back home to the girl's village for over a year. Then one day the young man arrived in his wife's village with a stunningly beautiful woman. The villagers were puzzled about why he had this beautiful woman with him, because they recognized him as the one who had married the famous Ten Cow Bride. As they looked more closely, however, they discovered that, in fact, this beautiful woman was the Ten Cow Bride. She had been transformed into a radiant, lovely woman. What had happened?

She had been transformed by the way her husband valued and respected her. He viewed her as though she were a Ten Cow Bride. As he did so, she became one. That's the price he paid for her! That's the way he talked about her! That's the way he treated her! He called forth her beautiful qualities by the way he valued her. How many of you would like to have a Ten Cow Husband? How many would like to have a Ten Cow Wife? How many would like to have a Ten Cow Child? The pathway to such a goal is based on how highly you value and how well you treat your loved ones. Your attitude toward them can have a transforming effect upon their lives.

There is a famous Italian painter named Michelangelo, who is considered one of the greatest painters of all time. When I teach about these four pillars in seminars, I bring a copy of one of Michelangelo's paintings with me. It is just a copy of the original that I print off the Internet, but I ask the students to pretend that it is the original painting. I ask them to imagine what it would be like if I had in my hands the original painting of this famous painter and not a copy that was downloaded from the Internet.

This original painting would be worth tens of millions of dollars. It is extremely rare, it is fragile and it is very valuable. I tell the participants that the reason I want each of them to personally hold the original painting that was created by this famous painter.

I then proceed to pass this painting around the classroom from one student to another. I remind them that it is very valuable, it is very fragile and it's worth tens of millions of dollars. "Be careful!" "Use both hands and don't drop it or spill anything on it". As this picture makes its way around the classroom, I point out how much respect everyone gives to it. People are very careful how they hold it. Some would rather not touch it at all. Expressions of awe and wonder are voiced as they observe the beauty of the artist's work.

I then ask the seminar participants, "What makes this picture so valuable and worthy of such respect?" Well, first of all, it is valuable because it is the only one in the world. It is an original painting and it can never be reproduced. Even the artist himself can never make another painting exactly like this one. Secondly, it is valuable because of who painted it. Michelangelo, the great artist, himself, personally painted this picture. His hands personally held the brush and painted the beautiful strokes we see on the canvas. His skills and abilities are revealed in the painting. He was such a master craftsman! He blended the colors together in such a brilliant way! It is truly the work of a Master!

I then change the shift the focus from the painting to my wife. My wife is an original creation also. There is no other woman in the world like her. She is unique and is one of a kind. Michelangelo did not create my wife. God himself, the creator of the universe, fashioned and formed my wife! He put her DNA together and designed her unique personality. He personally created this special woman and then brought her into my life. He then said, "Larry, this is for you." How precious and special! The Bible says that a woman of noble character is worth far more than rubies. (Proverbs 31:10)

One English translation of the Ephesians 2:10 says, "we are God's masterpiece." You are a masterpiece! Your spouse is a masterpiece! Your children are masterpieces! Viewing each other

in this way will change how we treat our family members. The Bible says children are a gift from the Lord. God created each one of them, himself, and they are precious to him. Each family member is a masterpiece, created by God.

So, the next time your spouse comes home from work, surprise him/her by saying, "Welcome home masterpiece!" When your children return home from school say, "Welcome home masterpieces!" What a transformation in our family life would take place if we honored one another in such a way.

This third pillar of respect is especially important to men. Whereas love is the deepest longing in a woman's heart, respect is the deepest longing in a man's heart. Men want to be respected by their wives. In fact, for men, being respected is even more important than being loved. If a man feels disrespected, he will feel unloved. Anger is often a man's response to feeling disrespected whereas crying is often a woman's response to feeling unloved.

A man wants his wife to respect his judgment and wishes that his wife wouldn't always question his decisions. He doesn't want her to argue with him over the direction he is going. A wife may try to help her husband by offering advice and reminders. Unfortunately, a husband often interprets his wife's helpful suggestions as evidence that she doesn't respect his ability to make good decisions. Instead of her reminders motivating him they often irritate him and send a message that she doesn't trust him.

There is nothing that motivates a man more than the admiration and respect of his wife. He wants her to respect him for who he is, as well as, for what he does. Unfortunately, respect is often the greatest challenge for a wife. She is prone to become critical and mistrustful of her husband's decisions. Just as the Scriptures encourage a husband to overcome his greatest weakness and to love his wife, the Scriptures encourage a wife to overcome her greatest weakness and to respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:33) Unconditional love and respect are the twin pillars that help husbands and wives walk together in oneness.

Understanding: Pillar D

Understanding is the fourth pillar for building the house of oneness. Love is the most enduring of these four pillars, trust is the most fragile, respect is the most neglected, but understanding takes the longest. I have been married to my wife, Violet for over 45 years. I love her deeply, she is extremely trustworthy, and I have a deep respect for her. However, after 45 years of marriage, I still do not understand her! This is the area that needs continual attention in our marriage.

Understanding takes the longest, but it is the thing that people desire the most. People want to be understood. Wives want their husbands to understand them. Children want their parents to understand them. Family life is transformed when everyone seeks to understand one other, instead of demanding understanding from each other. Understanding is achieved through active listening and by taking an interest in the other person.

When Violet and I were first married, I wanted to demonstrate my love to my new bride, so I regularly brought her flowers through out the first year of our marriage. In fact, on the first anniversary of our wedding I presented Violet with a dozen red roses. I took a picture of her with

the roses to commemorate the occasion.

However, a few months into the second year of our marriage Violet surprised me during a time of sharing together. She expressed her appreciation for the expression of love I was making through the flowers. However, she shared that she didn't really enjoy cut flowers that much. You can imagine my shock and surprise as I heard this news from my wife. She continued to explain that, although she appreciated the cut flowers, she really enjoyed potted plants much better. They lasted longer and she could enjoy them for several weeks. Cut flowers lasted only a few short days before they had to be thrown out. Once I understood what my wife really liked, I was able to bless her and serve her in a much more effective way. Although my intentions were good, without this understanding, my actions missed the mark.

The Bible says that we should be slow to speak and quick to listen. (Proverbs 1:19) What do you like to do? I like to speak and not listen! In fact, sometimes when my wife is talking to me I am not really listening to her. Instead, I am thinking about what I am going to say as soon as she stops. If we don't listen to others we will never understand them. Our attempts to bless others will be misguided because we really don't know them. We end up, "scratching them where they don't itch!"

One of the greatest frustrations my wife expressed early on in our marriage was that I didn't understand her. She would open her heart to me and share a concern with me. I thought she wanted me to "fix the problem". I would give her some Scripture verses and a short lecture on how she could overcome this issue. However, she was not looking for advice from me. She was not expecting me to "fix the problem". Rather she was looking for understanding and empathy.

So now I don't try to fix the problem anymore. Instead, I listen attentively, nod my head, and convey a genuine interest in what she is sharing. When she finishes sharing, she says, "Thank you for being such an understanding husband! I feel much better! You have helped me so much!" I didn't say anything! No scriptural principles! No lecture or advice! Instead, I merely responded by giving to my wife what she longed for most; an understanding and empathetic heart.

Proverbs 18:13, says that we are foolish to give the answer before we hear the question. Sometimes in the past I have interrupted my wife or finished her sentences without waiting for her to fully express her thoughts. I didn't wait to hear the full story. If we don't allow time for our partners to ask their question or express their feelings, the Bible says we lack wisdom and we will be guilty of making judgments based on partial understanding.

Understanding requires that we listen with our heart and that we listen to the other person's heart. We can't just listen to words and respond to verbal information. Facial expressions, body language and tones of voice can reveal very different messages. We need to we pay attention to these vital communication signals. In fact, I have discovered that in marriage there can be what I call a "mysterious marital language". In marriage communication, sometimes "Yes" can mean "no" and "no" can mean "yes"! No one ever told me this before I got married.

I would sometimes ask my wife when our relationship was distant, "Would you like to talk with

me?” She would drop her head, lower her voice and with a tone of resignation respond reluctantly, “No that’s okay.” But in fact, as I soon learned, she was really saying “Yes! I want to talk with you but I just need some encouragement. I want you to pursue me some more before I am ready to talk.” At other times I would ask her, “Are you okay?” She would say, “Yes, I am fine!” But her tone of voice and her body language sent a different message to me. It took me some time to learn how to really listen to my wife’s heart and not just to her words.

In Matthew 7:12, the Bible tells us “do to others what you would have them do to you.” Some Christians have referred to this passage as the Golden Rule. Jesus said that this principle sums up the message in the Law and the Prophets. It is certainly a great truth that needs to be applied in our relationships with others. However, in the area of understanding other people and serving them effectively, we need to take this excellent concept one step further. People do not always want to be treated the way we want to be treated. So, we have to learn how to treat people the way they want to be treated; that requires understanding them.

I have a friend who is a very high-energy leader and always needs to be involved in something. He is an extrovert and is energized by being with people and by continually being busy. The thing he hates the most is being alone with nothing to do. I am exactly the opposite. Even though I enjoy activities and social interactions, I much prefer to be by myself. I find it very refreshing to spend time alone and away from people. Both of us are involved in Christian ministry and we each travel and conduct seminars.

My friend invited me to come to his community for a week and conduct a seminar for his church. Being a good host and wanting to make sure that I had a good time while we were together, he planned a full schedule for the week. In addition to the scheduled seminar meetings, he took me to visit several of his friends and we went out to eat together regularly. We went sightseeing in the area and we talked together into the late hours of the evening on several occasions. I did not have one hour to myself during the entire week. I came home totally exhausted. There was no time in my schedule to be renewed through time alone.

A few months later, I invited my friend to come and conduct a seminar at my place. I knew that he led a very busy life and hardly ever had time for himself. So, being a good host and wanting to bless him, I thought the best thing I could do was to make sure he would have some time alone to be able to relax. I set up a light seminar schedule for him and told my staff not to bother him in between the meetings. I wanted my friend to be able to enjoy some time alone.

He, however, was frustrated and bored because he wanted something to do. Being with people and being active was the way he relaxed. It was the way he was renewed. He did not enjoy having a lot of time with nothing to do. This experience showed me the importance of treating people the way they want to be treated and not treating them the way I want to be treated. I treated him the way I wanted to be treated and he treated me the way he wanted to be treated. Neither of us understood the needs of the other, so we were unable to love one another in a way that “hit the mark.” We both had good intentions but we failed in our actions because of a lack of understanding.

There was a man who was a missionary to an Asian nation. During the summer months he was

asked on a number of occasions to share in various churches on Sunday morning. When he would get up to speak, one of the church staff would promptly bring him a cup of hot water. Now you have to understand that the church had no air conditioning and it is very hot outside. As the missionary was getting ready to share his message, beads of sweat would run off his face. He desperately wanted something cool to sooth his throat, but he could not even think about drinking the hot water.

In this Asian culture it is considered good hospitality when you serve the speaker a cup of hot water, no matter what the weather is outside. Culturally, it is believed that hot water is best for the throat; therefore this is what you do to be a good host and to be a blessing. To give the teacher a cup of cold water would be considered an insult, an action that says you do not consider the teacher valuable. But if you are a foreigner and understand this cultural view point, you can communicate to the church staff that cold water is preferable to hot water. Understanding can open many doors to the communication process.

Many couples do not understand each other because they do not use the same language to express love. Imagine if you could only speak and understand the **Korean** language and you were married to someone that did not understand a word of **Korean**. Instead, your marriage partner spoke and understood only **German**! Obviously, you would not be able to understand each other at all, even though you spoke to each other perfectly in your own language. You could declare your love to one another, but it would be to no avail. You simply could not understand each other's language.

As ridiculous as this illustration may sound, this is exactly what happens in many marriages. It has been observed that each person expresses love and receives love in a different way. We all speak different love languages. In fact, five primary love languages have been identified. The key to understanding your spouse and your children is to identify their primary love language and then communicate with them in that language.

The first love language is called **Words of Affirmation**. A person who uses this language uses words to express their love to another person. He or she feels loved when others express affirming words to them, either verbally or in writing. A wife who uses this language will always compliments her husband with statements such as, "You are such a sensitive husband!" "You are a great example of a servant leader!" "I'm so proud of you!" These are the expressions of love that flow easily from the lips of a wife who is fluent in this love language.

The second love language is **Giving and Receiving Gifts**. Gift giving is a universal component in any loving relationship throughout the world. It is a tangible way that people show their love for one another. A husband who speaks this love language is always buying his wife thoughtful gifts, even though there is no special occasion. When he travels, he will bring back something that he thinks will be especially meaningful to his wife. This husband is always listening and watching to see what his wife's likes and dislikes are. He is very observant and takes great delight in finding something that he knows his wife likes. Such a husband is always appreciative of any gift his wife brings him and he thanks her profusely for her thoughtfulness.

Let's look at how this difference can affect a married couple. Let's say a wife speaks the first

language, **Words of Affirmation**, and her husband speaks the second language, **Giving and Receiving Gifts**. They have been married for ten years and are struggling in their relationship, so they come to you for counseling. The wife talks to you alone and complains that her husband doesn't love her. She tells you how much she loves him and illustrates this by pointing out that she continually encourages him, affirms him and praises him. However, she tearfully shares, "He doesn't love me! He never compliments me! He never tells me how pleased he is with me."

So you ask her, "Doesn't he do anything?" To which she replies, "He keeps buying me these worthless gifts all the time." I've told him not to waste our money on these things, but he doesn't listen to me." "Every time he takes a trip he brings me something and it usually just ends up in the closet or I throw it out later." "I don't understand why he continues to do this!" "I don't appreciate these gifts at all!" She is speaking **Korean**! He is speaking **German**! They don't understand each other's love language.

So, you invite the husband to come in to talk with you and you ask him how things are going in his marriage. He tells you how much he loves his wife, but he says he is discouraged because his wife doesn't love him. To illustrate his point, he tells you of the numerous times he has given gifts to his wife over the past ten years. He has given her presents on her birthday, on their anniversary, and upon his return home from every trip he has taken. He has even given her gifts on days when there is no special occasion. He points out that he has consistently and continually demonstrated his loving commitment to her.

However, he complains, they have been married for ten years and she has never once bought him a gift just to surprise him. She doesn't buy him gifts for his birthday or their anniversary anymore. She tells him they are adults and they don't need to give each other presents on such occasions anymore. You ask him the same question you asked his wife, "Doesn't she do anything to express her love to you?"

"Well," he admits, "she always says she loves me and that she is proud of me. She tells me that I am a good husband. She compliments me often, but those are just words," he says. "Words without deeds are meaningless and empty. Love needs to be demonstrated and not just verbally expressed." Again, she is speaking **Korean**! He is speaking **German**! They don't understand one another's love language. This failure on their part is the reason they are not feeling loved by the other person. These two people need to learn how to speak each other's language. Then the love they have in their hearts can be clearly expressed and received.

The third love language is **Physical Touch**. The individual using this language connects with others through physical contact in some way. This person puts his hand on your shoulder when he talks to you. He holds your hand. He hugs you. He kisses you on the cheek. He is always expressing love through the channel of the physical interaction. For people that do not speak this language or that grew up in cultures where physical touch was not encouraged, such expressions of physical touch make them feel uncomfortable.

Perhaps the greatest expression of this particular love language is with children. Wise parents, in any culture, are touching parents. There are numerous examples of Jesus touching children in the Bible. For example in Mark 10:13-16 we read, "People were bringing little children to Jesus to

have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.”

It has been said that the average person needs at least six hugs a day in order to feel loved and valuable. Psychologists have concluded that the need to feel loved is a primary human emotional need. That doesn't mean that we go out right now and hug our children six times. It simply means that when given the opportunity to appropriately touch them during our interactions with them, it is important to do so. Such physical touching communicates love to them.

One must be especially considerate of the culture when expressing physical affection. In several Asian cultures people are very reserved in nature and they consciously avoid any form of physical touch. Hugging and kissing are not considered as acceptable ways of greeting one another.

Physical touch is the primary love language in some cultures and everyone in that culture grows up believing physical touch is the normal way to express love. Such people often struggle finding intimacy when there is limited physical contact. If they marry someone from a culture where physical intimacy was not expressed, it is hard for this person to believe his or her partner really loves them. This is true, even though there are other non-physical expressions of that love.

The fourth love language is **Spending Quality Time Together**. People who speak this language want your undivided, focused, attention. For them, the most important issue in a relationship is togetherness. This is my wife's favorite language. Nothing blesses her more than for me to suggest that the two of us go away for a few days and spend time alone. It doesn't matter where we go or what we do. Just the fact that we are alone and together are all that matters. She enjoys quality time and intimate conversation with me more than anything else.

A wife who speaks this language wants to know that her husband is interested in her. The way that she is assured of his love is that he takes time to be alone with her and to listen to her without interruptions or distractions. This language is the favorite language of most women. A wise husband realizes the importance of taking time to listen to his wife and having quality conversations with her. This commitment provides the foundation for a lasting, loving relationship.

The fifth and final love language is **Acts of Service**. People who use this language are always doing something for you. They run errands for you. They offer to clean your clothes. They clean up the meeting room and set up the chairs. Each act of service is their way of saying to you, "I love you!" They don't have to be asked to do something. Instead, they recognize a need and willingly step forward and meet the need. They do it cheerfully and they don't resent serving. They consider it a privilege. It is their way of expressing their love to you.

This is my favorite language. I love to do things for my wife. I take her shopping. I do the dishes after our meals. I help clean the house regularly. I am saying to her, "I love you", "I love you",

whenever I do these things. The problem, however, is that sometimes I am so busy doing things for her that I don't spend time WITH her (which is her love language).

This is actually a problem in many families. The husband works hard at his job to provide for his family and spends hours sacrificing on their behalf. He serves them in many ways but he neglects spending time with them. His wife and children feel that he is always gone and never available. When they express to him that they feel he is neglecting them and that he doesn't love them, he is perplexed and hurt. From his perspective, he is continually demonstrating his love to them through his acts of service.

Several years ago I was teaching on the five love languages in one of our training programs. One of the couples in the school stood up and shared this testimony with the class. The man loved his wife deeply and wanted to do something special for her on her 40th birthday. He knew she loved music and that she desired to have a piano. They had never been able to afford such a luxury, but as he thought about their situation, he came up with a plan that he was sure would both, surprise and bless, his wife. He volunteered to work extra hours at his job at night and on Saturdays. In this way he was able to make some extra money that he could put aside towards the purchase of a piano.

He didn't tell his wife about his plan so as to surprise her. For several months he sacrificed in this way and secretly put the extra money aside. Finally, he had saved up enough to purchase his gift. On the day that his wife turned 40 years old, a beautiful, brand new, piano was delivered to their apartment. He could hardly wait to see his wife's expression of surprise and joy. When the piano arrived and his wife realized what was happening, she burst into tears. However, her tears were not the tears of joy that her husband expected.

Instead, they were tears of pain, disappointment and bitterness. "I don't want a new piano!" she burst out, "I want YOU! You're always gone! You're never home! You love your job more than me! You work late at night all the time! You work on Saturdays! You're never here! I feel alone and neglected!"

Her husband couldn't believe his ears! The reason he had worked all those long and extra hours was because of his deep love for his wife. He had wanted to show her how much he loved her through this special piano. He was speaking **German**! She was speaking **Korean**! His love language was giving and receiving gifts and her love language was spending quality time together.

Probably the greatest example of "Acts of Service" was when Jesus washed the disciple's feet. In a culture where people wore sandals and walked on dirt streets, it was customary for the servant of the house to wash the feet of guests as they arrived. Jesus, who had instructed His disciples to love one another, gave them an example of how to express that love when He took a basin and a towel and proceeded to wash their feet. After that simple expression of love, He encouraged His disciples to follow His example.

Most **Asian** cultures have a great expression of this "acts of service" language. When you enter someone's home, you take off your shoes. The host then provides you with "house slippers" to

wear while you are in the house. This is very comforting and it allows the host to serve you and it helps you to relax. Jesus said, after he washed the disciple's feet, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you (John 13:15)."

Your spouse and your children most likely speak a different love language than you do. To grow in understanding and intimacy, you need to discover their love languages. Then you must learn to speak to your family using their love languages. Most people are fluent in more than one language, but one language is usually their primary way of communicating love. It is important to discover that primary language. You can express love to a person most effectively in their primary love language.

I want to conclude this section on the four pillars by giving you an opportunity to respond to what you have learned. The following exercise can be done with your spouse if you are married. If you are not married you can do this with another family member or a close friend.

First of all, review the material on the four pillars; love, trust, respect and understanding. Determine which of these four pillars you think is the strongest pillar in your family.

Secondly, determine which of the four pillars you think is the weakest in your family. Then, discuss with your spouse or another person the things that you can do that will strengthen the weakest pillar in your family.

Next, review the five love languages and identify which one is your primary love language. In addition, identify the primary love languages of the other members of your family. Then, discuss with your spouse or other members of your family ways that you can express love to one another using each other's primary love language.

Application Prayer

Father, thank you, that every member of my family is a masterpiece, created by you. Help me to treat them with the respect and honor that they deserve. Forgive me for where I have not honored them in the way that was appropriate. I want respect to be a strong pillar in my family. I commit myself to speak and act respectfully toward each member of my family.

Please help me to understand my parents, my siblings, my children and my spouse in a deeper way. I want to discover what are their deepest desires and longings. I commit myself to seek to understand them. I know that I must understand them if I wish to serve them effectively. Help me to discover each family member's love language so that I can express your love to them in ways that they can understand.

I ask you, Father, to strengthen each of the four pillars in my family. I want a close family. I want us to be one, even as you and Jesus are one. In Jesus Name. Amen.