LANGUAGES OF LOVE
SESSION 6
LOVE LANGUAGE #4 - ACTS OF SERVICE

I. Introduction of Love Language #4 – Acts of Service (W/H- 1 min. total)

(W)
“This session is exploring the fourth major love language; Acts of Service. By acts of
service, we mean doing things you know your spouse would like you to do. (Your spouse’s
name) seeks to please me by serving me. To express his love for me he does things for me.
These acts of service can require little planning and can be done quickly without much
thought such as (enter simple acts that you see as acts of service such as picking up shoes,
or putting away clothes). Or these acts can need more planning and effort such as (More
complex acts of services-painting a room, etc.)”

(H)
“Typical acts of service that show me love are (your spouse’s name) (enter simple acts that
you see as acts of service such as organizing our activities, mowing the lawn, cleaning out
the car or truck or initiating a sexual interlude). But typically these acts require some
thought, planning, time, effort and energy. But they only fit as expressions of love in this
language if they are done with a positive spirit.”

(W)
“There are two important points we want to make clear. One is, the act of service I give to
(your spouse’s name) is what he determines as an “act of service”. And the second point is
that the act of service I give to (your spouse’s name) is my choice.”

II. Examples of Acts of Service (H/W - 4 minutes total)

A. Christ example of an act of Service: (Priest or H - 1 minute)

John 13: 3 – 17
“Fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from
God and was returning to God, he rose from the supper and took off his outer garments.
He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and
began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came
to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Master, are you going to wash my feet? Jesus
answered and said to him, What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will
understand later.” Peter said to him, “you will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered
him, Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.” Simon Peter said to him,
“Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.” Jesus said to him,
“Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over;
so you are clean, but not all.” For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he
said, “Not all of you are clean.”
So when he has washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table
again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’
and ‘master’ , and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher have
washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to
follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it.”

(Husband comment here on Jesus message to us ) Jesus gave his disciples a simple act of service, washing of their feet to show love. He asked his disciples to love one another and use his example.

B. Give an example of an act of service for each other that helped you feel loved.  
(W/H - 1 min. total) Share a personal example

C. Share examples of acts of services by which you express love to others in your parish or religious community (PRIEST or H/W - 2 minutes)

“In Marriage Encounter we use acts of service by ___________________________. (List the types of local customs that your community makes/does/use to make weekends special for weekend participants) Couples on weekends feel the love of our wide community through these acts of service.”

III. Impediments to Acts of Service

A. Performance before marriage doesn’t guarantee the same performance after the wedding. (W - 1 minute)

“What we do for each other before marriage is not an indication of what we will do after marriage. Before marriage we are carried along by the force of the in-love obsession. After marriage we revert to being the people we were before we ‘fell in love.’ Our actions are influenced by the model of our parents, our own personality, our perceptions of love, our emotions, needs and desires. Only one thing is certain about our behavior: it will not be the same behavior we exhibited when we were caught up in being ‘in love’.”

Give an example of an act of service that your spouse used to do for you in the early years and you assumed would continue forever. Contrast it with the very different here and now. Choose examples that seem polarized to make the contrast clear.

B. Love is a choice - The decision to love our spouse (H - B&C - 2 minutes)

“Love is a choice and cannot be coerced. Requests give direction to love, demands stop the flow of love. By making requests of each other rather than demands, we give our spouse the choice of making the decision to love. Criticism and demands, as we all know, tend to drive wedges between us. With enough criticism my spouse may acquiesce to my demands and do what I want, but it will not be an expression of love.”

C. Doormat or Lover?

“Making demands can be seen as treating our spouses as objects. In that case we preclude the possibility of love. If I manipulate my spouse by guilt, (“If you were a good spouse you would do this for me) or coercion by fear (“You will do this or you will be sorry”) this is not the language of love. No person should ever be a doormat. Allowing
oneself to be used or manipulated by another is not an act of love. When we allow this, we are allowing our spouse to develop inhumane habits. Love says, “I love you too much to let you treat me this way. It is not good for you or me.” Instead, we can give guidance to love by making requests like “I wish you would…” but I cannot create the will to love. That is my spouse’s decision, to love me and do the act of service I have requested.”

Share a time when a demand for an act of service was changed into a request and what was the response. How did this affect your relationship?

D. Criticisms and demands leave us empty (W - D&E - 2 minutes)
“Criticisms and demands can dry up our love tanks, but in fact the criticism from your spouse can be a clear clue as to their primary love language. People tend to criticize most loudly in the area where they themselves have the deepest emotional need. Their criticism is an ineffective way of pleading for love. But in this case, we can use the criticism to clarify their needs. With this insight, you can choose to put your spouse’s needs as a request and may well surprise your spouse by your positive response.”

E. Stereotypes
“Learning the love language of acts of service will require some of us to reexamine our stereotypes of the roles of husbands and wives. We must be willing to break away from these stereotypes, no matter what love language our spouse speaks, if our spouse asks something of us that seems inappropriate to our role. Remember, whatever your perceptions, chances are your spouse perceives marital roles somewhat differently than you do. A willingness to examine and change stereotypes is necessary in order to express love more effectively. There are no rewards for maintaining stereotypes, but there are tremendous benefits to meeting the emotional needs of your spouse.”

Briefly share a stereotype I would have to overcome to show you love as an act of service.

IV. Acts of Service – other dialects (4 minutes total)
A. Performing acts of service our way (W/H)
1. “Sometimes with the best intentions in the world, we can perform an act of service but do it our own way rather than the preferred method of our spouse.”
2. Give an example of your spouse doing a simple act of service for you but doing it in a way far removed from your preferred way. In disregarding your preference, your spouse is limiting the love communicated.

B. Communication of love (H/W)
“In loving relationships, it is not uncommon for us to speak in the language of love, ‘acts of service’, because we often do things for our spouse as a decision to love on our part and assuming they will appreciate our gesture. Unless this is your primary love language, it may be that you do not necessarily hear your spouse’s decision to love as messages in this language. I know that can certainly happen for me.”
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Briefly illustrate this with an example of your spouse offering you love through an act of service and you not recognizing it. This can be taking such acts for granted without recognizing them as gifts of love.

C. Support by acts of service  (W/H)
1. “When we are under pressure, those close to us often give us support by acts of service and they give us encouragement and nurture us. Often what nurtures us more deeply is when we least expect the act of service. When we are surprised by our spouses’ love for us.”
2. Briefly share an example and describe how that feels.

D. Acts of service that are special  (H/W)
1. “It’s much easier to notice an act of service when it’s special rather than just one of the routine tasks.”
2. Give a brief example of an act of service that your spouse has done that is out of the ordinary and how appreciative you are of it. Then contrast your lack of appreciation for another act of service your spouse does that is a routine task. Your lack of appreciation for that loving act can destroy the gift of love that accompanies the act of service.

VI. Prayer: “Doing our share” (Prayers for Married Couples) page ____ in workbook (1 min)

Instructions:
This time we’re not going to have a dialogue. Instead you are going to spend 5 minutes preparing lists of Acts of Service you would like to receive and then discuss them with your spouse. After that, we would like you to go to your sharing group for 20 minutes.