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SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S WAY

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

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Now, here's Pastor Nat Crawford, with guest, Dr. Gary Chapman, author of *The 5 Love Languages of Children*:

N: Dr. Chapman, again, great to have you back on the program today.

G: Well, thank you. It's great to be back.

N: Well, Dr. Chapman, you wrote the book, *The 5 Love Languages*, over 25 years ago. And as I read it, I'm going to think maybe 15, 16 years ago, I thought to myself, this is revolutionary. It's fantastic. And then I began to wonder, "I wonder if this would work with kids?", because my wife and I, we thought, well, we'll have kids in a couple of years, but I wonder if this actually translates. So does the 5 love languages concept work with children?

G: It does. You know, early on, parents would ask me that question, you know, "Does this work with our children?" And I had spent more time with marriage counseling with folks, rather than parenting, you know, but I thought, I think it would. And I talked with Dr. Ross Campbell, who lived in Chattanooga. He was a Christian psychiatrist, and he's now in Heaven. And he'd written a couple of books on how to really love your child. And I thought, let's team up. And let's explore and do a little research, and see if this really works with the children. And of course, we found that it does. And to parents. I say, the question is not, do you love your children? The question is, do your children feel loved? You know, he's in my office, he's 13. He ran away from home and he's in my office. And he says to me, "My parents don't love me. They love my brother; they don't love me." I knew his parents. I knew they loved him, but the problem was they weren't speaking his love language. And so he didn't feel loved. And I'm finding that over and over and over, parents are sincere and parents do love their children, but there's a whole lot of children that do not feel loved.

N: Well, before we get into the languages themselves, talk a little bit about how the love languages work in principle. Because, I know in marriage, when you apply this way, what typically has happened, I think at least in my marriage, was I was giving away my love in the way that I wanted to be loved. And so there becomes a deficit in that relationship, and to get to that point where you recognize it, and apply it in your marriage, that's one relationship. But now you're thinking about, okay, I've got one kid, two kids, three kids, four kids, five kids. I mean, that's a massive undertaking. So how do you discover this, and how do you actually apply it with

children?

G: Well, I like to picture inside every child, there's an emotional love tank. And if the tank is full, that is the child feels loved, the child's going to grow up emotionally healthy. If they don't feel loved, they're going to grow up with emotional struggles. And the teenage years, they will probably go looking for love, typically in all the wrong places. So this is really, really important. And you can discover a child's primary love language by the time they're four years old. Observe their behavior. How do they respond to you and how do they respond to other people? For example, my son's love language was physical touch. He's grown now. It's still his love language. But at that age, when I would come home from work in the afternoon, he would run to the door, grab my leg and climb on me. He's touching me because he wants to be touched. Our daughter never did that. Our daughter would, at that age would say, "Daddy, come to my room. I want to show you something". She wanted quality time. She wanted my undivided attention. So if a parent is aware of this, you really can discover a child's primary language pretty early in their life.

N: And I would assume that the challenge may be for some parents, when it's not their primary or their secondary. Would that be correct?

G: Yeah. If it's not your language, and let's say you didn't receive that language, it's a learning curve. I remember the father who said to me, "Yeah, I read your book on children." And he said, "I know that my son, a nine year old" - I think he was nine years old - "I know his language is physical touch." He said, "But Gary, my father never touched me. I don't ever remember getting a hug from my father." He said, "It's just not natural for me." I said, "Okay, I understand that. So let's learn it. I said, come up here and stand beside me; hit me on the shoulder." He hit me on the shoulder. I said, "That's your assignment this week. Just one time, walk up to your son, hit him on the shoulder." I said, "You can run if you want to, after you hit him. " [I love it.] And then we did a pat on the back, you know. We just kind of worked our way through. And eventually, he hugged him. And that week he came back, he said, "Gary", he was crying, he said, "I hugged my son; I hugged my son". You can learn to speak any of these languages to your children, even if you didn't receive them as a child yourself.

N: Well, and that's such an important principle to remember, because the reality is, just because it's not natural to you, doesn't mean you can't give it. And just because it is natural for you, doesn't mean that you're supposed to, you know, give it as well. And I've seen that with our own kids, our oldest, his primary love language is words of affirmation. But our second and third son, they're both so different. Our second would like physical touch. I mean, that kid would hug you all day long, if he had the opportunity. And honestly, even though that's not my primary love language, I love coming home, because I know as an 11 year old kid, who's built like a football player, he's going to come up and tackle the tar out of me. And I receive it with gladness, because he loves me so much, he wants to express it. So I hug him back. But then my youngest son, he's got gifts. I mean, I want to talk about that gift some a little bit. Not yet, but I mean, I

think that kid's going to make me broke if I'm not careful.

So let's get into the love languages themselves. I would like you to unpack each one. So I'll just start going through them, but words of affirmation. Okay. So if a parent is listening or watching, and they realize, you know what, that is totally my kid. How do they do that with skill? What does that look like?

G: Well, you know, there are different dialects in all the languages. And when it comes to words of affirmation, for example, there are words of affection, which focus on the child. You know, "You look nice today." "I love those muscles, man." "You know, I love it when you smile," or just the words, "I love you. I love you." But those words should always be spoken alone. Never, "I love you... if you clean your room up", "I love you...if you do this", or "I love you; would you do this for me?" Always, "I love you." And the idea is, "No matter what you do, I love you. You're my son. You're my daughter. I love you. No matter what. I don't always like what you do, but I love you, man." So words of affection,

and then there's words of praise, which focus on something the child has done. You're praising them for making up their own bed, or you're praising them for some other feat. But let me emphasize this. You praise them for effort, not for perfection.

I remember, I think he was 13. He was in the hospital with stomach ulcers. And I visited him to try to find out what was going on. And I said, "How do you and your dad get along?" And he said, "I don't ever please my father." And I asked him, "Give me an example". He said, "Well, if I'm playing baseball," he said, "and I get a double, my father will say, you should have made a triple out of that. Boy, you've got to learn how to run." And I knew what his father was trying to do; he was trying to motivate him to do his best. [Right.] But what the teenager was hearing was, "I don't ever please my father." So we praise him for effort, you know, effort, not for perfection.

N: Wow. Wow. What a key difference between the two! Well, I've got to say, words of affirmation is my backup, you know, my secondary, and as you were talking to me, I'm like, man, I feel loved right now; this man loves me and he recognizes who I am. So I've just got to say, you're speaking my love language here, but that is so powerful and beautiful. So if your child does have that love language of words of affirmation, again, celebrate who they are in Christ, and how God has made them, rather than their performance. I mean, that's one of the beautiful things, as God's masterpiece, we work from God's love, not for God's love, and we, as parents, need to convey that reality to our children. And one of the ways we can do so, is by giving them those words of affirmation freely, but specifically, and I really appreciate what you said, when they're alone. They're not tied to our performance. So good.

Okay. What about quality time with the child? Let's be honest: in today's workplace, you could have both parents working. You could be a single parent trying to raise kids and trying to love them. And they have the love language of quality time. How do you do that effectively?

G: Well, first of all, you have to go to where the child is, because they can't come to where you are. That means if they're crawling on the floor, you go to the floor, and just spend quality time. If they're in the sandbox, you go to the sandbox. So you go to where they are. And let's face it. What you're saying is really true. We have to work at this. We have to realize this child needs love, and this is the way they receive love, and I'm going to make time. And it doesn't mean you have to spend all your time with them. In fact, you know, let's say a mother is fixing dinner, or a father is fixing dinner. And the five-year-old says, "Can you go play with me? Can you go play with me?" And you say, "I've got to finish the potato salad. I'll play with you in a little bit." And they come back in two minutes. "Can you play now?" They're begging you for quality time. So what I say is this, "Give them five minutes of quality time, before you start making the potato salad." And say "Now honey, Mommy, Daddy has got to go make the potato salad." And because you filled their love tank, they'll let you make the potato salad.

N: Well, and I think that, I mean not to go back to marriages, but I think that's even true for marriages. You know, sometimes in the busy rhythm of life, even those five minutes when I come in first thing through the door, and I look at my wife, and I look her in the eyes, and I speak to her, and I give her that hug, meeting both of those, it's amazing what kind of dividends that pays. And she knows then, "Okay, at the end of the night, we'll reconnect, but he paused, he connected with me", and we can do the same thing for children, is what you're saying.

G: Yeah. Right. Absolutely.

N: Okay. So with quality time, let me ask one more question. Because one thing we've talked about, when we talked before is, with quality time with a spouse, you're not distracted. A movie is not okay, but what if you've got a middle school son and they love video games; can quality time be sitting down and playing *Madden 2020* with them?

G: I think it can. But the important thing is not the game. The important thing is you're spending time with them. So quality time is not always just sitting there talking with each other. Quality time can be doing things together, but again, whatever it is, the important thing is not the game. The important thing is the fact that we're doing this together, and yes, we're talking in and around it, before and afterwards, whatever it is. But yes, I think activities like that can be quality time with a child.

N: Fantastic. That's great.

N: Again, joining me today is bestselling author and speaker, Dr. Gary Chapman. And we are talking about *The 5 Love Languages of Children*. Highly recommend this resource. It's a game changer in parenting, and here we are kind of unpacking the love languages. And so before we keep going into this, I had a question about discipline and the love languages. What's the connection between the two, because we are called to discipline our children, correct?

G: Absolutely. Well, first of all, if you are speaking a child's primary love language consistently, they're more likely to follow the rules that you've laid down for them, because they're not trying to get your attention by disobeying. Here's another concept. When you do have to discipline a child, wrap the discipline in their love language; they're going to receive it in a much more positive way.

For example, let's say that the rule is, don't throw the ball in the house. You throw the ball in the yard, not in the house. If you do, we have to put the ball in the trunk of the car for two days. Okay? So let's say the child throws a ball in the house. So you go in, and you say, "Johnny, I love you so much. I'm so proud of you. You know, you almost always - let's say their language is words of affirmation, okay - you always keep the rules, but you know, this time you did break the rule, and you threw the ball in the house, right? So you know what has to happen, right?" "Yeah." So we go put the ball in the trunk of the car, and then you say, "But listen, I want you to know how much I love you and how much I appreciate the fact that most of the time you follow the rules, man. I love you." So you wrap the discipline in their love language, and they'll walk away knowing this was fair. This was right. You know, I got what was coming to me. You don't do that - let's say you just walk in and say to that same child - "Now, you know you're not supposed to throw the ball in the house, give me that ball. We're going to put it in the trunk of the car." And they walk away feeling like, "I try hard. And I messed up one time and I get clobbered." [Hmm, wow]. Really important to wrap it in love. And people say, "Well, what about gifts? You couldn't do that with gifts." Well, just give them a little candy piece before and after.

N: And so what you would not prescribe though, because I know there's going to be some people and even myself at times, your natural inclination might be, well, I'm going to withhold something from them that they really want, including a love language, because then that'll get the message across. But that's not at all what you would suggest, correct?

G: No, actually, if you take the opposite of the child's love language, and you speak that love language in a negative way, that is the most severe punishment you could give a child. For example, if words is their language and you yell at them, that's the most painful thing you could do for them. And the same thing is true with a gift. I'm not saying you should never take a gift away, but if you take a gift away from a child and their love language is gifts, that's really pretty severe punishment. And here's what I encourage couples to do. When you have a rule, always let the child know what the discipline is going to be. Then they know what'll happen, and you know what's going to happen, and you don't have to overreact or underreact, and you can do it as an act of love.

N: Wow. That's fantastic advice. Well, let's turn back now to the gifts themselves, because I know some people are really anxious to kind of hear, because they've got their kids in mind. Okay. What about the gifts? Like I kind of joked with you earlier, my youngest son, his love language is gifts. In fact, I'm convinced his love language is Pokemon cards, but I could go broke buying Pokemon cards. So how do you do gifts? And can you do it on a tight budget?

G: First of all, I'd like to say about gifts: as parents, we're parents; they're the child. We don't give a child everything they ask for, even if it is their love language. God doesn't do that for us, [thankfully]. No, I've been glad he didn't answer all my things I asked Him for. So no, we're the parent. We give a child things we think would be beneficial to them at that particular stage of life. So the child's begging you to buy them a phone for example; you don't think they're old enough to have a phone. You just say, "Honey, I love you too much to give that to you now. The time will come when I will, but I love you too much to do that now." So you don't give them everything they're asking for. And I want to go back to the reality. It's not what you give them; it's the fact that you thought and gave them something. You can pick up a stone in a city parking lot, and take it home, and give it to an eight year old boy, if his language is gifts. And you say, "Hey, man, I found this today and I thought about you; look at the colors in this stone. I wanted you to have it. If gifts is his love language, you will find that stone in his dresser drawer when he's 23, [right]. He'll remember the day you gave it to him.

N: Yeah, my middle son, his secondary language is gifts. And before I went to India for some work, he gave me this stone as a gift. And I said, "Thanks buddy". And he goes, "Will you take it wherever you go?" I go, "I'll keep it in my pocket." And I kept that stone in my pocket for two weeks while traveling across India and Nepal. And then I brought it back to him and said, "Now I'm not, it's not that I don't want this, but I want to give this back to you as a gift. This rock has been in my pocket every day, 24 hours a day. And now I'm giving it back to you." But this has been, you know, through the roof. And he, I mean that rock is in his private safety box of trinkets that he's collected and been given. It means the world to him. And it's a rock.

G: All that counts.

N: Bingo. Okay, well that gives us, that brings us to the acts of service. So this one I'm curious about, because this is my, you know, one of my love languages here. But what are you saying, that we should be doing children's chores? Are you, I mean like, how do you do acts of service appropriately with the child?

G: Well, you know, this is a love language that you have to speak when the child is an infant, because they can't do anything. We put the food in, we take the food out, we do the whole thing, but this is doing things for the child, typically things they can't do for themselves. And there's a whole bunch of those things, you know, age appropriately, we're doing things they can't do for themselves. But as they get older, we teach them how to do things. That's an act of service also. It takes even more effort to teach a child, for example, how to cook a meal. That's a huge act of service. But when they're younger, this might be mending a doll dress for a seven year old or six year old. It may mean putting a bicycle chain on for a child that's learning how to ride a bicycle. It's just doing things for them that they want done and they can't do it themselves. So depending on the stage of life, there's different things we're doing, but it's doing things for their benefit.

N: And that'll pay long term dividends as well. Teaching my kids how to fish, as they're looking

how to put a worm on a hook; they loved learning that, but they also then love, you know, doing it for themselves over time. My wife, she an excellent cake decorator. And you know, she's been able to teach our kids how to do that. And for those, the love language, they just eat it up. It means the world to them. So that's a great piece of advice. Well, the last love language we need to cover today is touch. Why do you think physical touch is so powerful for children, and how do you do it appropriately?

G: Well, you know, all research indicates that children who are touched tenderly, affectionately, when they're young, will grow up emotionally healthy. And children that are not touched for long hours - and this was discovered mainly in orphanages, where many times, small children are not touched for hours - and they grow up with emotional struggles inside. So physical touch is a way of communicating emotional love. When they're little, we're holding them, we're cuddling them, we're kissing them. And as they get older, we're still kissing them. We're hugging them. We're giving them back rubs. You know, it's affirming touches. Now, you know, we all know there's been a lot said about physical abuse in families, and no question about that, but children need to be touched. The touch needs to be affirming, touch, not abusive touch. And even, I say to fathers, you know, even pre-adolescent girls, sometimes fathers kind of draw back from their daughter, because they've heard so much about, you know, sexual abuse, and they don't want to do anything that's wrong. And I say, "Listen, if you don't continue to hug your pre-adolescent girl and kiss her on the cheek, she'll find an 18 year old boy who will." [Hmm. Wow.] They still need to feel love by physical touch.

And can I just throw this in Nat; I'm not suggesting that we only speak the child's primary love language. I'm suggesting you give heavy doses of the primary. You sprinkle in the other four, because we want the child to learn how to receive love and give love in all five languages. That's the healthiest adult. And most of us did not receive all five growing up. So, you know, heavy doses of the primary, and then sprinkle in the others, and the child's going to grow up emotionally healthy.

N: Wow. That is excellent. Okay. Real quick. One last time. Can you tell our listeners what the love languages are?

G: Words of affirmation, acts of service, gifts, quality time, and physical touch.

N: Well, I cannot thank you enough for your time today, and I encourage our listeners, and those watching online: do go to the 5lovelanguages.com. Go there, take the assessments. I kid you not, by following this and applying it, it changed our marriage. And as a family, we're able to love our kids, so that they walk away knowing that they are loved. But as Dr. Chapman said, be sure you're sprinkling all of them out, because then we're showing we're a well-rounded human being, and our children will be as well. Dr. Chapman, thank you so much for your time today.

G: Well, thank you Nat. Good to be with you. Appreciate what you guys are doing.

