

Point of View

by Ralph Pohlman



TALKING IN CODE

There is a widely used language that does not have a dictionary. Women are able to speak it from about the age of three. Men can't learn it no matter how long they study.

Although this language has no actual name, it is the strange communication of words, tones, eyebrow-lifting and pauses which enable women to do the following: carry on a duel in tones so placid a man thinks they are exchanging compliments; comment savagely on a female absentee while giving men

the impression she is her bosom friend; make gracious gestures to ease awkward social situations.

For example, when it's time for guests to go home, many a man has been dragged out by his wife, despite the hostess's pleas to stay. Perhaps the hostess said, "Can't I give you another spot of coffee?" in a tone that left out "before you go."

Or, perhaps two couples are walking home from an afternoon concert. As they are saying goodbye outside Couple No. 1's house, Wife No. 1 pleasantly

inquires, "Won't you come in for coffee or a drink?"

If she had said heartily, "Do come in for coffee or a drink with us!" Wife No. 2 would probably have accepted. But to a woman's ear, an over polite, tentative tone indicates clearly the lay of the landscape.

Unfortunately, before she can give a good excuse for declining, Husband No. 2 barges in with, "Why sure! Helen and I haven't a thing to do until dinner." Thus, in a living room strewn with newspapers, Couple No. 2 find themselves eating crackers served by an

unsmiling hostess in an atmosphere not unlike the Arctic Circle.

When a woman says, "I don't want a thing for my birthday," she's speaking her ancient mother tongue. What she means is, "I haven't noticed any packages being sneaked in, so I want to be sure you don't forget."

Many doghouses have been occupied by men who took the statement literally.

Women also make statements with which a man must not agree too freely. These statements

often begin with "that." For instance, when one's wife says, "That Miss Smith is quite attractive, isn't she?" of a woman to whom one might have been slightly attentive at a party, a husband who agrees does so at his peril.

Along with all of the above, men and women view relationships very differently. Take the TV remote control. Men think whoever gets to it first controls the clicker. As a matter of fact, I can watch the World Series, three football games, a show about bears and an alien movie at the same time. It's a gift.

My wife does not have this gift. She has no feel for when to zap and when to stop. She will stop at two people sitting at a table talking; a child crying; an ambulance scene; a lovers' quarrel; or an old movie you can't see for the scratches. You see what I mean.

Being a more gifted zapper, I know these are not worthwhile subjects, so I stop at important things like an attack on a space-

ship, a naval battle from World War II, wrestling or the latest swimwear fashions. The speed of zapping must be constant through all these important subjects. It will be noticed if you have a slightly longer hesitation when you come across the swimwear fashions.

You, the gifted zapper, must maintain a consistent pace without anyone noticing there might be a bit more interest in the swimwear fashions. As I said, it relates to giftedness, and not everyone can do this. But somehow my wife sees all this as an aspect of our "relationship."

But as I started to say at the beginning, men and women think differently. Until they program men to notice you're almost out of toilet paper, the two sexes will never communicate. Of course, men can be pressured into all sorts of household tasks, but they will not do them the way a woman would.

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FAITH & LIFE

A MENNONITE PERSPECTIVE

by Gord Alton



On Valentine Day, we celebrate the experience of love. But, what is love? I find that the church and our culture often send conflicting understandings of love. Within the church love is frequently defined in terms of commitment. During a Christian wedding ceremony, commitment is celebrated and stressed through prayers, ritual and a pastoral reflection. Within our culture, we get a different message. Love is regularly seen as sexuality. Whether we watch TV, videos and movies, love is often portrayed as two people making love to each other. What we generally forget is that commitment and sexuality can have nothing to do with love.

While nurtured love can lead to commitment and acts of sexuality, commitment and sexuality can be void of love. In fact, when love is missing, commitment and sexuality typically become substitutes for love. A commitment, without love becomes simply an obligation, a relationship of "shoulds" and no desire. Sexuality, lacking love, becomes reduced to lust and chemistry, a relationship based on "making" love happen through technique. However, when love is missing, both commitment and sexual experience can feel empty — something feels not right.

So, what is love? If love is not commitment or sexuality, then what is love? The best word I have found is "intimacy." When we feel close to someone we are having an intimate moment. This sense of closeness arises through talking back and forth with one another whether it is around the kitchen table, at the coffee shop, in the car or in the bedroom. This sense of closeness also arises when we share life

experiences together, like a loss in the family or successes at work or watching our children perform at school.

Intimacy also involves depth and self-disclosure. Talking about the weather or whether the Leafs won last night doesn't nurture intimacy. However, as we share our feelings, hopes, desires, disappointments, challenges and ourselves with someone else intimacy enters the picture. This vulnerability scares us, but there is also a strong desire to be loved, validated and known at this deeper level. This is why it is so important to nurture a safe environment so that this depth of sharing can happen. Without this sense of security little intimacy can happen.

This is the beginning of my sermon message on Sunday February 1st. Please join us as I explore with my community how we can nurture intimacy in all of our love relationships.

Happy Valentine's Day.

Feedback? We'd love to hear your comments. Please contact us at:

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