

The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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WHAT'S YOUR FINANCIAL LANGUAGE?

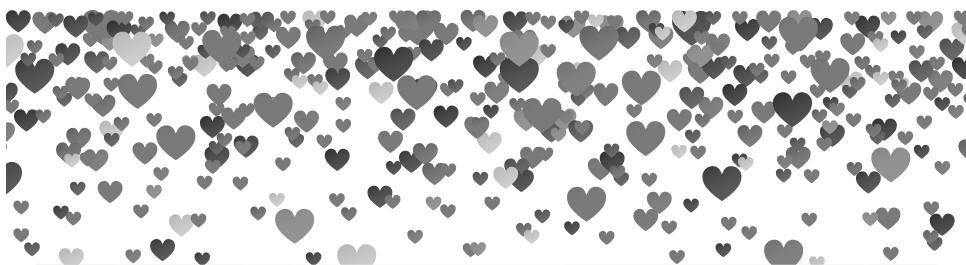
BY JIM AND JULIE LORENZ

- *Jarrold's parents had plenty of money, and they never taught their son any financial principles, so now that he is starting a career of his own, he spends money as he feels like it. He can't understand why his wife gets so upset with him.*
- *Kaitlyn shops online late at night when she feels stressed, but she tries to hide her spending from her husband.*
- *Even though Tony is an adult with a job, he still has a credit card from his parents. Because they help support his family, his mother and father expect to have a say in where their grandchildren go to school, what kind of vacations the family takes, etc.*
- *Ava doesn't want to spend money on anything "extra," while her husband believes that the "extra" is what makes life worth living.*

It is no secret to any married person that finances can be a major source of contention in a marriage. According to a 2017 survey of 1,072 adults in the United States, arguments about finances were the second leading cause of divorce, behind unfaithfulness.¹

So many people with degrees in finance and psychology have written on the subject of marriage and money, and we are certainly no experts. However, after being married for 26 years, we have one solid piece of advice for couples: learn to speak the same financial language.

Perhaps you're familiar with the classic five love languages as explained by Christian



STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and *finances*.



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“Typically, one spouse is a nerd and the other is a free spirit when it comes to the budget.”

author Gary Chapman. If you are not, we highly encourage you to study up on them and discover the love languages that you and your spouse “speak.”²

The problem is that many—if not most—couples do not speak the same love language. For instance, Jim’s two primary love languages are acts of service and gifts. Julie’s love language is words of affirmation. It doesn’t take a counselor to see that in our early married years, problems came up because we were saying “I love you” in a language that was not easily understood by the other. The problem was that we were not “bilingual” in our love languages.

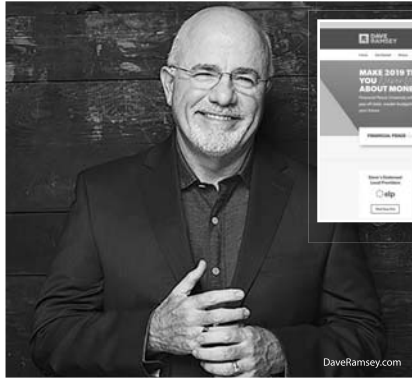
We suggest that it is a good idea to take the love language concept and apply it to finances. More than likely, you and your spouse do not speak the same financial language. When it comes to money, you both have different backgrounds, different personalities, and different values.

Financial educator Dave Ramsey divides couples into two categories. “Typically, one spouse is a nerd and the other is a free spirit when it comes to the budget,” he says. He goes on to explain:

“Nerds enjoy putting together the monthly budget and calculating the numbers. They like that it gives them a sense of security, and they feel like they’re taking care of their loved

“[W]hen couples learn to agree on their money and are determined not to let it drive them apart, they form a unity that is crucial for a successful marriage.”

DAVE RAMSEY



ones. Free spirits don't want to have anything to do with the numbers and tend to 'forget' about a budget. They may feel controlled or not cared for, and appear irresponsible to the nerd. This can be a dangerous combination that leads to problems in your money and your marriage.¹³

Fortunately, Ramsey offers assurance that nerds and free spirits can make their marriage work. “[W]hen couples learn to agree on their money and are determined not to let it drive them apart, they form a unity that is crucial for a successful marriage.”¹⁴

We think that most people fall on a spectrum somewhere between nerd and free spirit, which is why it's important to figure out the language your spouse is speaking when he or she talks about money.

When we were first married, we didn't have much income. Every month when Jim would balance the checkbook, it would lead to arguments. It was miserable for both of us. Neither of us were crazy spenders—which was a blessing—but neither were we on the same financial page.

Much later, we attended a financial seminar at our church, and it really helped us start speaking the same language as we realized we had some shared core values, and we were willing to sacrifice for them. We still speak different dialects when it comes to money, but we understand the same language when we approach big purchases, make choices about the long-term direction of our finances, and negotiate our monthly spending.

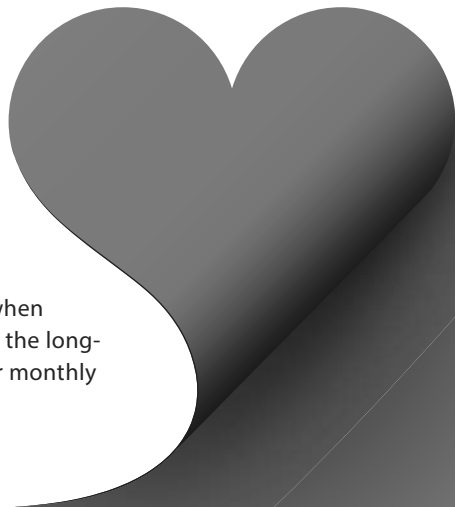
Many churches offer financial seminars, such as Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University, for members to work on their financial situations.

RESOURCES

¹³www.daveramsey.com/pr/money-ruining-marriages-in-america

¹⁴www.5lovelanguages.com

¹⁵www.daveramsey.com/blog/nerds-and-free-spirits-can-unite-over-the-budget



Here are some questions for you and your spouse to answer to help you understand each other's financial language:

- As you were growing up, what was your family's approach to money? (for example: never talked about it, lots of worry about it, never saved, strict budget, etc.)
- What are your financial goals? (get out of debt, buy a house, take a trip, save for college)
- What sacrifices are you willing to make to achieve your goals? (buy a used car, forego an expensive vacation, get a second job)
- What are your financial values? (thrift, preparedness, fun, luxury, helping others)
- What are your lifestyle values? (work/life balance, want to stay home with young children, an upwardly mobile career)
- What are your financial talents? (budgeting, keeping the bills organized, inspiring the family)
- How do you prefer to handle money? (online only, cash only, once a week, once a month)
- How are you going to teach your kids about money? (allowance, paid chores, bank account)

If you each answer these questions and use them as a launching point for further discussion, you can learn more about each other's financial language and begin to dialogue about a common language that you can speak together.



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Director: Norman Zimmerman

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Stewardship Ministries
Gordon Botting, Director