

CAPTIVATING Thoughts

MY LOVELY VALENTINE

Did you receive a Valentine's Day card this year? Did it make you feel loved, even more valued? Many received nothing. That is except the feeling of rejection, the perception of low self-worth, and belief they lacked beauty.

Just where did this potentially dangerous holiday come from, and what does it all mean?

The truth is it stems from an ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia (also known as Februatio), an annual 3-day ritual believed to ward off evil spirits and increase fertility, held February 13th to 15th. Later, when the church began to prohibit pagan practices, they turned focus to St. Valentine, the patron saint of "engaged couples and anyone wishing to marry.

What amounted to a renamed, refurbished holiday, then picked up steam, adapting itself into the Valentine's Day, which included the added elements of Cupid, the Roman god of erotic love, and giving of cards.

Today, our definition of Valentine = a gift, or card with a message of deep love, affection and devotion.

Sisters, God sent His Valentine 2,000 years ago. John 3:16 He sent Him before the world was formed and He is asking you, "Will you be my Valentine?" Will you give Me your heart & soul? I have your spirit, but will you allow me to possess every chamber of your heart?

— KATHLEEN GAGE, FREE TO BE

A Wife's/Woman's Top Five Love Needs

by Gary Chapman*

- 1. Unconditional love and acceptance** – Imagine your husband loving you completely, without hesitation. Without the memory of your past mistakes. Sounds just like Christ, doesn't it? Acceptance is at the heart of unconditional love, and God is the only true source. He sees you, all of you. A personal relationship with Christ is needed in order for your husband, or anyone, to reflect/mirror God's love for you. What does His love look like? Encouragement, support/partnership, affirmation, value, communication (including active listening) and time spent together (phone, letters, & prayer) Remember, your husband is NOT Jesus, so he cannot love as fully as Christ 24/7.
- 2. Emotional intimacy and communication** – When a woman hears the word intimacy, she thinks about emotional connection and expects verbal communication. A woman wants a marriage that includes transparency ... dialog of inner thoughts, expressions of feelings, and to see spirit & true self. Being heard is almost as important as being seen. (For more about being "seen", see Captivating by Stasi Eldredge). Strive to resolve conflict, even if it is merely to agree to disagree. Differences are healthy but conflict, a serious disagreement or argument, can do harm. Remember "iron sharpens iron", i.e. makes better, not worse! Safeguard your relationship. Not through control, but through honesty and respect.
- 3. Spiritual intimacy** – A woman wants a marriage that is as strong as a cord

a·ga·pe | ag-ah'pay (ἀγάπη)
n.

1. Love as revealed in Jesus, seen as spiritual and selfless and a model for humanity.
2. Love that is spiritual in its nature and manifests itself as brotherly love, affection, good will, benevolence.

of three strands (Eccl. 4:12): God, husband, and wife. She wants God to be inextricably woven throughout the marriage relationship. She needs to be growing spiritually while watching you grow spiritually and leading the home. Two of the best gifts a husband can give his wife are first to encourage her spiritual growth, and second to encourage fellowship with like-believers, beginning with himself. A woman flourishes when encouraged to express her spiritual gifts, and she feels safest to do so when she has his prayer covering.

- 4. Encouragement and affirmation** – A daily dose of encouragement will keep a bounce in a woman's step! But like most medicines, one dose isn't enough, healing requires a full regiment. Encourage with words, deeds, & actions. Rinse & repeat!
- 5. Companionship** – The feeling of fellowship or friendship. Marriage is an investment of time and togetherness over time. So stay the course, work out your inevitable differences and remember, you can be your spouse's best friend, but not their only friend! The Body of Christ provides community for the believer and companionship for the single believer.

When we follow God's leadings through the practice of biblical principles, we are blessed and live a full life.

*edited for application

To TALK

4 keys to effective communication

- T. thoughtfulness** = to think, consider, be careful
- A. active** = energetic, powerful, effectual, progress
- L. listening** = hear, attend, heed, concentrate, submit
- K. kindness** = concern, care, gracious, pleasantness

Validation

by Rick

We all long for validation. The desire is placed there by The Lord. Even Adam and Eve longed for validation. Their sin was looking for validation in the wrong place.

Validation is so key to who we are and where we are going.

Even when we receive validation from those around us, it is only temporary. The longing has been silenced temporarily, but NO ONE person can truly provide a lasting validation.

It is God, and only God, who can truly validate us unconditionally. The unique thing about God, is that He is a gentleman. God will never push Himself upon any one, and only goes where He is invited. We must ask, or invite, Him in. He will never force His will upon ours.

There are so many people who know "about" God and His bible, but many may never experience Him on a personal level. Then there are those who experience his presence in a real way, but know nothing of His Word (Bible).

Bible Knowledge & Understanding
+ Experiences
= Full Relationship with The Lord

Some say the Bible is a story book of God's relationship with others and reveals how He wants to bless us through an active relationship with Him. Others refer to it as a Love Letter, between Creator and His Creation (us). What the Bible is NOT, is a book of rules and regulations! Instead, it is a Book of Life and the best possible way to live it successfully, and fully validated.

Ignore its truths and the hard times, and hard places, will not only be harder, they will actually appear to be very cruel. It's not that hard times won't come, or can always be avoided, it is simply that we aren't alone in them. Not to mention the ultimate impact tends to be far less for those following God and His truths.

Christians (followers of Christ) can act strangely when you tell them what God is doing in your life, or a truth He has revealed to you personally. Some are quick to say, "I knew that!" and then proceed to share their own personal story, stealing the lime-light if you will.

Others may even tell you, "That's not right!" or, "You've got it all wrong!" Either of these statements can leave one feeling small, inadequate, or even stupid. These "feelings" can surely steal your joy and taint the experience of sharing. But they can also serve to remind you that your validation does not come through the acceptance or approval of others, but instead, in doing God's will and receiving His blessings.

Whether others are aware of their potentially deflating behavior, or a personal agenda to "one up" you, can be debated until Jesus returns. No matter, how you receive their words, how you respond is always your choice.

On the other hand, when we hear words like:

- That is deep!
- I will put that in my spirit and contemplate it.
- That witnesses with me!

That they can serve as a confirmation of our own progress. But again, they should not serve as true source of validation, only God can satisfy our thirsty soul.

As we grow in Christ, our responses should grow kinder as well. When another's words don't witness with us, it is better to consider meditating on them and offering a response such as, "Something doesn't feel right about this to me. Can we take a deeper look?"

One thing I do know is that no matter what, if "it" doesn't line up with, or can't be found in the Bible, it's not from God!

God's Word validates His will.

This is the key. When God gives you something, it is for YOU! He may choose to have you share it, to benefit another, but He may not. It shouldn't matter, YOU are enough!

God's knowledge, wisdom, and enlightenment given to you, is for you ...when you are ready for it. However, if you aren't ready or reject it, He will bring it back around in a different way, but He will bring it back. God wants you healed, whole, and equipped. He will not let up or shut up until we are!

Food for Thought

Validation, do we truly understand what we are asking for?

You may be surprised to learn that the word validate or validation is actually not a biblical word (from the original Hebrew or Greek). Surprised?

However, the words we use to define validate: to affirm, prove, or test "with the expectation of approving" are found in the Bible.

Rom. 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to **test** and **approve** what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Cor. 3:13 Each man's work will **become evident**; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will **test** the **quality of each man's work**.

Note the use of the word validate in the Message Bible, known as ... "a contemporary reading bible", not a study bible.

Psalm 37:5-6 Open up before God, keep nothing back; he'll do whatever needs to be done: He'll **validate** your life in the clear light of day and stamp you with **approval** at high noon.

NIV: Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will **make** your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your **vindication** like the noonday sun.