



is a Dutch pastor for workers in dredging and marine construction. His foundation is member of the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA), a network of Christian maritime ministry organizations like Apostolatus Maris and the Mission to Seafarers. Every year, he visits the Philippines around Christmas time, to keep in touch with different manning agencies.

MISS YOU !!!

LOVE IN A LONG DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP



After all, it turned out okay with me. I mean this: my father was a sea captain, my brother reached the rank of chief mate, I had several seafaring uncles, and I.... I became a pastor. So, I was the only landlubber in the family. But since a few years, I also have a taste of the life at sea. Six years ago, I was appointed as the "dredging pastor". I visit dredging and offshore ships. They do not sail from one port to another, so I visit them when they are working at a project somewhere. Usually, I stay a few nights on board. So, I meet a lot of seafarers of all kinds of nationalities, Filipinos included, of course. On the vessel, I usually organize a prayer meeting, I also arrange meetings about a certain topic, and I have lots of private conversations. One of the main issues: how to keep up a long distance relationship, when you are away from home.

Since my work at sea, I started to understand my mother a bit better. She had to deal with the absence of my father. And there was the need for adjustment, when my father got home again. Sometimes, there were tensions, which I would not understand as a kid. Long distance relationships tend to develop a bit differently compared to "on shore" relationships. On the one hand, there is less chance to grow together, there is less opportunity for intimacy. On the other hand, there is less danger of a boring everyday routine. The longing for each other has a certain quality. "I miss you" is a sign of desiring

love.

A few years ago, I read a great book: The Five Love Languages – The Secret to Love that Lasts, by Gary Chapman. I quite often refer to his book when I talk to seafarers. Chapman explains how we can have a total lack of understanding regarding love matters:

'With all the books, magazines, and practical help available, why is it that so few couples seem to have found the secret to keeping love alive after the wedding? I believe the problem is: we have overlooked one fundamental truth – people speak different love languages. One husband's aid: "I tell her how beautiful she is. I tell her I love her. I tell her what a good mother she is. None of that seems to matter. She says she doesn't feel my love. I don't know what else to do." His wife's response: "If he loved me, he would help me around the house. All he does is watch TV.

The problem? He is using words. She is crying for actions. If he wants her to feel loved, he must learn to speak her language. It's as simple as that.'

Chapman distinguishes 5 languages of love: 1. Words of affirmation 2. Giving gifts 3. Acts of service 4. Quality time (undivided attention for your partner) 5. Physical touch (and intimacy). According to Chapman, everyone has a primary love language. In a relationship, it is good to discover each other's language and try to speak it. For example, if your wife really values quality time, and you are totally into physical touch, you might end up with a lot of miscommunication. So better try to understand each other's love language first.

Now, the same holds for long distance relationships, I think. It is important to understand what you miss, when we tell each other "I miss you". One partner will especially miss the affirmation.

The other will miss the special quality time on the Sundays. A third one will miss the husband's contribution to the household. It is good to realize what we miss in each other when we are away from home. Because then we can try to communicate about it via the conversations on Skype or via the mail. You also better understand what each other's problems might be. It is also important when you get home, that you do not need to compensate everything by huge gifts, which you buy abroad. For gift-giving is not the primary love language of every wife. Sometimes, planning quality time ahead might be more fun to look forward to. Or the promise that you will take the children to school.

Well, I would suggest that you read the book as a couple. Then you have a good and fun topic to talk about. I also noticed, when we had discussions on board, that there are a lot of practical ideas that you can learn from each other.

Finally: you might think that I have a share in Moody Press which distributes The 5 Love Languages. No, I do not get a percentage of each sold copy. For me, I get a reward when I hear that couples were able to fix problems in their (long distance) relationships. My mother wishes that the book had been around in her time.

Stefan Francke

The quote is from the website: www.5lovelanguages.com. ■

