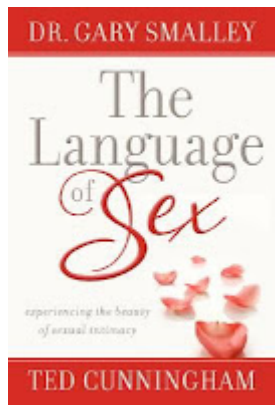


Review: The Language of Sex



One of the increasingly frequent tasks I have in a growing church is the need to lead engaged couples through preparation for marriage. I find it useful to be on the look out for better resources and fresh input and insight – and find the benefit to Gill's and my own relationship a blessed side-effect.

When it comes to books the stock-standard resource we use has been Gary Chapman's *Five Love Languages*. I will now be adding Smalley & Cunningham's *The Language of Sex* to the pile of "recommended's" and have some on hand to give away when appropriate.

There's a whole bunch of Christian pop-pysch "improve your sex life" books going around at the moment. Most of them can't seem to get away from some sort of giggle-factor adolescent "married Christians are allowed to be naughty" type shallowness. I find Leman's *Sheet Music* to be a bit like this and of little value. They often read like a breathless over-eagerness to catch up with the sex of the '90's presuming (and wrongly so, most twentysomething Christians don't need to be told, yet again, of the non-proscription of oral sex) that Christians are still repressed in the '50's. And for those who are genuinely struggling there is often a tantalising picture of marital sexual freedom painted with little help provided or light shed to actually help them get there.

Smalley and Cunningham's book is different. It takes an appropriately long time to get to issues such as technique and sexual education – and even then only covers them relatively briefly. In their own words, they explain:

"You'll notice that this chapter about creativity [in sex] is not near the front of the book. That's on purpose. The

foundation of honor, security and intimacy is the bedrock on which to build creativity. One reason affairs get started is because individuals are looking for “greener grass.” Greener grass deceives you into believing that you must go outside the marriage to experience greater heights of sexual intimacy, without all the responsibility. That’s simply not true.” (page 147)

Their key framework is their “formula”:

Honour → Security → Intimacy → Sex

“... honor creates security. Security creates intimacy. And intimacy sets the stage for great sex. The truth is that you cannot have great sex without honor and an open spirit.” (page 16)

And so they spend the bulk of the time effectively and usefully teaching the readers to build honour, security and intimacy into their marriage before they get to the “sex ed” detail. The path to sexual fulfillment is through investing in the other person and in relationship – and that’s where they concentrate their teaching.

Much of it is common sense. But it is usefully constructed and presented common sense. It makes the book a useful tool for helping get past the presenting issue to the *actual* issue. It is advice that, while not exhaustive, is followable and practical and solidly cognisant of the realities of Christian growth and the difficulties and stumbles that often come on the road of maturation.

Some of those who are significantly struggling or facing overwhelming abuse-recovery or addictive behaviour issues will quickly reach the end of what this book has to offer. Yet, even then, I could see the material providing a “way in” to understand and so be an effective stepping stone on the path

to finding necessary help.

I found this book to be biblical, gentle, and real.
Recommended.

