

Opposites attract (or attack)

by Gary Chapman on Tuesday October 13, 2009



Before he got married, he dreamed about how wonderful it would be to get up every morning and have breakfast with his wife. After he got married, he found out his bride doesn't do mornings. He dreamed of hiking and overnight camping, but he discovered that the Holiday Inn was her idea of roughing it. He believed in saving money. In fact, he paid cash for the ring (it was a discretely small one). Her philosophy was "shop today, you may be sick tomorrow." He believed there was a rational answer to everything. "Now let's think about this" was his favorite statement. Her response? "I'm tired of thinking. Why can't we just do what we want to do without thinking about it?"

Before they were married, she had her own dreams, to go places and do things (nice places and expensive things). His idea of excitement was watching Monday Night Football. She wanted to be active in a young couples' class where they could study the Scriptures, meet friends, and do missions projects together. Sunday morning worship was his idea of Christian commitment. She dreamed of a man who would walk in with a dozen roses, smile, and say "I love you." His philosophy was "why waste money on flowers that will be gone in three days? If you want flowers, I'll buy silk ones." She wanted to jump in the car and see where they ended up on Saturday night. He never left home without a AAA TripPak.

Differences can be deadly. They also can be delightful. Why are men and women so different? The ultimate answer lies in the fact that we are creatures of an infinitely creative God. In Genesis 2:18, God says, "I will make him a helper suitable for him" (HCSB). The word suitable is sometimes translated "one who stands opposite of." The female is one who stands opposite of the male, one to whom he can relate. She's not the exact replica but one who is, in many ways, his opposite. Thus, the potential for partnership.

Did God give us these differences to make us miserable? Anyone who studies the Scriptures will know that this is not possible. God's purpose in our differences is to enable each of us to help the other reach his or her potential for God and good in the world. In fact, most of the differences are the very things that drew us together in the first place! The timid, reserved individual is attracted to the outgoing, vivacious personality. The spontaneous, disorganized person who is always losing his keys is attracted to the neat and orderly person for whom

everything is in its place. The somber "everything is serious" melancholic is attracted to the humorous, fun-loving individual. The high-strung, argumentative person is attracted to the even-tempered peacemaker.

What's attractive can become decisive. Differences always demand adjustment, and we're not by nature creatures of adjustment. We're all egocentric; our way is the best way, and when our way is in conflict with their way, then they need to change. Such a self-centered approach to marriage is evidence of man's fall and will ultimately lead to the demise of a marriage.

Jesus calls us to a far higher alternative both in His example and in His teaching. He calls us to a ministry of service, not demanding our own way, but seeking to serve others in the name of Christ (Matt. 20:25-28). Paul challenges us, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs" (Eph. 4:29, NIV). We must come to value our differences as a gift from God. Differences give us added opportunities to serve, to adjust, and to develop understanding.

God has given each of us freedom to choose. Husbands and wives must give each other the freedom to be different. The closer we come to God, the more we'll respect each other's differences. This doesn't mean that we'll necessarily like the other person's behavior, speech, or emotional response. It does mean that we give them the liberty to be human. "Lord, help me to see others the way you see them" is a good prayer to help us gain God's perspective on each other. Rather than focusing on how differences tend to divide us, let's focus on how the differences allow us to complement each other.

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