

Preparation for Marriage Manual

Part 2 – Uniqueness and Acceptance in Marriage

Your partner is **not** you. He or she is other, created in God’s image, not yours. He or she has the right to be other, to be treated as and respected as other.

If you are planning to marry it is certain that you have a preconceived fantasy of your ideal mate or what the perfect marriage should be.

When you marry, after a while you will begin to realise that your fantasy and the person you have married will begin to diverge sharply.

At this point you may embark on a reform programme for your partner. If so, you misconstrued the words of the wedding ceremony “*and the two shall become one*”, to mean that your partner should become like you and your fantasy.

Any attempt to mould your partner to match your fantasies is arrogance on your behalf and an insult to them.

We find instruction for right living in the Christian Bible.

Ephesians 4:2 [Amplified] “*Living as becomes you, with complete loveliness of mind [humility] and meekness bearing with one another and **making allowances because you love one another.***”

List six specific examples of how we think we will have to make allowances for our partner’s different approach to life:

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Which of the differences have you thanked God for?

Every person who marries has characteristics similar to the one they marry. But they also have many characteristics that are different. Different ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling and behaving are part of marital adjustment. Differentness is important because it holds out the promise of need fulfilment for each person.

It is important to remember that one of the main motivating factors towards marriage is the person's need to feel complete because of what the other person has to offer. On the other hand, this innate differentness contains seeds for hurt and disruption.

Why?

The answer is quite simple. We are threatened by the way our partner is different. We are afraid that we might have to adjust our way of thinking and doing things. We also believe *"if it's different, then it's wrong!"*

Many problems occur because of this lack of tolerance for differences of attitude or opinions in the marital relationship.

Problems occur because we do not allow our partner to be different.

It is arrogant to think we can reshape another human being.

We try to change people to conform to our ideas of how they should be.

So does God, but there the similarity ends.

Our ideas of what our partner should be or act may be an improvement or an imprisonment.

We may be setting our partner free of behaviour patterns that are restricting their development or we may be simply chaining them to our behaviour patterns that need to be revised in God's eyes.

Questions we need to ask

- 1 If we are definitely bothered by the uniqueness of our partner, we need to ask ourselves, *"What would it be like to be married to a person just like me? Would I like it?"*

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2 In what way would the presence of Jesus Christ in my life help me to adjust to differences in my marriage?

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