

## *What Did You Expect?*

### *Commitment #5 – We will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace.*

- Read John 1:3 and Psalm 139:13. What truth do these verses remind us of when it comes to our spouse?
  - God created them, he knit them together
  - What does God’s creation include – just physical features? No, includes personalities, gifts, strengths, weaknesses, etc.
  - This means that “the real and significant differences between you [and your spouse] began in the mind of the creator.” P. 209
- This means that “unity in marriage is not the result of sameness...Unity is, rather, the result of what husband and wife do in the face of the inevitable differences that exist in the lives of every married couple.” (p. 210)
- So, what are we to do with our differences?
  1. Appreciation of our differences begins with a decision to Celebrate our Creator.
    - The more we understand the differences come from his hand the less we will see them as obstacles to be removed. The more we understand the differences come from his hand the more we will be able to resist the temptation to try to remake our spouse in our own image.
  2. We also must resist seeing our differences as right or wrong
    - Most of our differences are hard-wired into our being – they are not an issue of moral rightness or wrongness
    - Some of us are people oriented, some of us project oriented – we tend to think that whichever we are is what is best in God’s sight! When this happens, we begin to act in ways that are dismissive and disrespectful, leading to unneeded conflict
  3. Determine to respond to your differences with appreciation and respect
    - Celebrate who God made your spouse to be!
  4. Learn where your differences create difficulty and call yourself to unification work
    - Husbands – this is part of what it means to live with your wife in an understanding way – 1 Peter 3:7

- Literally that passage reads, “live with your wives according to knowledge”
  - Wives, learning where your differences create difficulty and seeking unification is part of what it means to respect your husband
5. Admit where these differences challenge you to grow – and commit to growing!
- Where do you need to be more patient, kind and humble? Where have you been prideful, thinking that your way is God’s way
- *All this is hard! It is difficult, challenging and consumes much time and energy, and so we must ask – if our differences cause such struggle, why does God allow them? Better yet, why does he ordain them?*

To answer this let’s consider 6 truths we must consider if we are to deal with our differences in an attitude of humility and grace

1. God is in absolute control over the details of our lives
  - Read Acts 17:24-27 and Psalm 139:13-16. What doctrines do these verses remind us of!
  - *They remind us of the doctrines of sovereignty and providence*
  - In essence “God has determined the precise place where each of us will live...and the exact length of our lives...the precise details of location, situations and relationship in which each of us lives.” (p. 213)
  - I am currently going through Jerry Bridges’ book *Respectable Sins* with the College and Career group, and Bridges mentions resting in the truth of Psalm 139:16 as one of the ways to deal with the sins of frustration and discontent – two sins that often result from our differences with one another
2. God has a purpose for the situations and locations in which he places us.
  - Here we begin to get to the answer of why he brings struggle into our lives, even in our marriages
  - Acts 27a – *That we might seek God!*
  - 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 – *So that we might be renewed*
  - 1 Peter 1:6-7 – *So that we might have the dross of sin removed*
  - “Our purpose for marriage tends to be different from the Lord’s...Our desire is that our marriages would be the location of our comfort, ease, and enjoyment; we often have desires no bigger than this. But God’s purpose is that each of our marriages would be a tool for

something that is way more miraculous and glorious than our tiny, little, self-focused definition of happiness. He has designed marriage to be one of his most effective and efficient tools of personal holiness.”

3. Marriage is one of God’s primary tools of personal change
  - › This means that when we resist change and complain about the daily difficulty of marital differences, we are really complaining about God’s means of sanctification, we are struggling against him!
  - › Proverbs 27:6 –
  - › Proverbs 27:17 –
4. God uses three kinds of differences to reveal and change our hearts
  - 1) Differences in personal hardwiring that God has formed in us (time oriented vs. event oriented, detail oriented vs. broad scope)
  - 2) Differences in viewpoints, instincts and tastes (sweet vs. salty snacks)
  - 3) Differences in personal sin and weakness and in our growth in grace – (we can’t understand why our spouse struggles so much with a particular sin because we don’t, and vice versa)
5. Change begins when we see these differences as grace rather than obstructions of grace
  - › “There are moments in our marriages when we are crying out for grace, not recognizing that we are getting it. We are not getting the grace of relief or the grace of release, because that is not the grace we really need.” (p. 216)
  - › We must learn to preach to us the theology of uncomfortable grace!
6. God is with you in your struggle
  - › Acts 17:27-28 – God has not only determined the where, what, how and who of your life – he has also determined to be near you
  - › The key is that we need to seek him
  - › Proverbs 8:17 - I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.
  - › Jeremiah 29:11-14 –