

# Lesson 25

Teacher's Manual

## BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP - PART III

READ & MEDITATE ON: Ephesians 5:21-23    MEMORIZE: Philippians 2:2  
Colossians 3:18-21

### INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a partnership where a man and a woman can develop character, as they earnestly strive to meet each other's needs. Through their total commitment to Jesus Christ and each other, God can work to refine them and develop their full Christian potential. Building a partnership is a lifetime project. There is an intense worldly attack on the marriage bond today, and many subtle devices are being used to destroy the family. Constant maintenance must be done to preserve the unity and strength of the marriage relationship.

CHART-19 I. CONFLICTS

A. Sources Of Conflict

No husband and wife are going to agree on everything all the time, because both are different people. You would not want your spouse to agree with you on all things pertaining to life, the marriage, or the family. This means that there are going to be disagreements in a marriage. If a husband and wife were to say they never disagreed, there would be something unhealthy about their marriage. Obviously, someone would have to lose their identity for there to be no differences. It could mean that the dominant partner had forced the weaker mate to agree with all their thoughts and opinions. Or it could mean that one partner simply lost interest in building a full relationship and chose not to become involved in conflicts. Neither is God's will in marriage.

The Christian woman wants her husband to be the head of the home. If he fails to take his place in the role God gave him, the woman does not know what to expect from him.

The Christian man wants to assume the responsibility that God gave him as the head of the home, and when his wife fails to submit to him, he feels the whiplash of her rebellion. She must recognize that the husband's authority comes from God (Genesis 3:16), and that wives are commanded to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22).

Conflicts arise when a husband: fails to be the spiritual leader, allows problems to creep in, does not give his wife support, is extravagant, praises or admires other women, takes his wife for granted except when he needs her, forgets anniversaries and other special occasions, does not praise his wife for small things, forgets the art of conversation, exercises poor judgment and makes unwise business decisions, is not conscious of his wife's needs, has bad manners, is inconsistent, is temperamental, and does not ask forgiveness when he is wrong.

His failure causes his wife to: feel insecure, feel helpless, assume responsibilities delegated to her husband, resent financial pressure, feel rejected, feel inferior to her husband, become jealous, feel degraded and used, lose her original feeling of tenderness for him, feel unimportant, feel uncherished, not know how to please him, seek attention from other men, lose her desire to make a home, look for outside interests, resist his decisions, become resentful and impatient, feel isolated from this world, and feel inadequate in trying to meet his physical needs. Besides natural differences between people, the Scriptures address other factors that can cause conflict. These potential sources of conflict are described in the following scriptures: Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:18-19; I Corinthians 3:1-3; James 4:1-3.

#### B. Uniqueness

The basic difference between a man and a woman can perhaps be summarized in one statement: A male is basically a logical, rational creature; a female is basically an emotional creature. This does not mean that a man does not have emotions, nor does it mean that a woman does not have logic. However, feminine logic differs from masculine logic, and the basic trait which they possess dominates each of the sexes. There is no superior or inferior sex. The sexes are not equal, they are equivalent—of equal value. They are different because God gave them special responsibilities for each other. If the sexes were the same, we would have no marriage because there would be confusion instead of fusion of the two.

Our ideas of what the other person should be may be an improvement or an imprisonment. We may be setting the other person free of poor behavioral patterns or we may be chaining him up in another behavioral bondage. We would do better to cooperate with God's grace and allow Him to perform any necessary changes.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

*Philippians 1:6*

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

*Philippians 2:13*

CHART-20

D. Facts About Conflicts

There are several points about conflicts that should be considered. Conflicts are:

1. Inevitable

Conflicts are a natural part of growth and family living. Therefore, they are inevitable. Jesus used the word "offences" for the word "conflicts" when He taught,

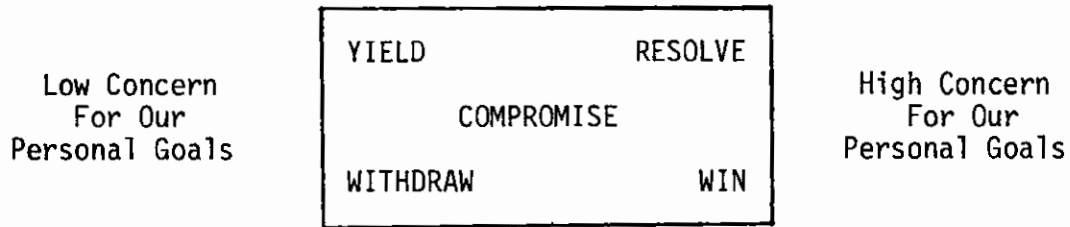
"Woe unto the world (mankind) because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come;..."

*Matthew 18:7*

2. Symptoms Of Unfulfilled Needs

Conflicts usually emerge as symptoms, although we treat them as the problems. Conflicts are symptoms of unfulfilled needs. Resolving the conflict will only solve the problem if the need in the other person's life is truly met.

High Concern For  
Marriage Relationship



Low Concern For  
Marriage Relationship

1. Withdraw

If you have a tendency to view conflict as a hopeless inevitability which you can do little to control, you may not even try to resolve it. You may withdraw physically by leaving the scene, or may simply "leave" psychologically. As you can see from the diagram above, this reaction has the lowest value because it gives up on achieving personal goals and developing the marriage relationship. This reaction should only be used as a "cooling off" period before attempting to resolve the conflict.

2. Win

If you feel that you must always look after your own interests, or your self-image is threatened by a conflict, you may choose to win. No matter what the cost, you must win! Domination is usually reflected in this style with no regard for the welfare of the marriage relationship.

3. Yield

While driving along the highway or approaching an intersection, you have probably noticed a yield sign. "Giving in to get along" is another style of reacting to a conflict. You don't like it, but rather than risk a confrontation, you choose to yield. This reaction places little or no value on achieving personal goals, but does display a high concern for the marriage relationship.

The spouse who is beginning to feel angry inside should report this emotion to his spouse, "Hold everything! I'm getting upset—angry! Give me time to cool off." The other should not respond with a dig, "You always blow your top." Instead, be understanding with, "Okay, let's wait and talk it over later." Find something else to do, and immediately withdraw from the source of irritation. Let each spouse protect the other when he senses arousing anger in his mate. Let him slow down his rapid-fire speech, lower his screaming voice and allow the flaming heat of anger to cool down. In this way, each helps to control the other's emotions so there aren't any hostile feelings between them.

There should be no loss of ego or status to an individual when he says "I am sorry," or "Please forgive me." It is usually as painful to the person who is being asked, as to the asker. It is a law of the Lord to ALWAYS FORGIVE (Matthew 6:14, 18, 21, 22).

There are some definite steps to victory over anger as well as other emotional problems such as fear and depression.

1. Face anger as a sin (Ephesians 4:30-32).
2. Confess your anger as sin (I John 1:9).
3. Ask God to take away your anger habit (I John 5:14, 15).
4. Be transformed by renewing your mind (Romans 12:2).
5. Thank God for the source of irritation (I Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:19, 20; Romans 8:28).
6. Repeat this sequence every time you get angry (Galatians 6:9; II Thessalonians 3:13).

## 2. Fear

Fear was the initial negative emotion found in the Bible after Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3:8-10). For the first time, man was afraid of the God who made him and loved him. Fear causes the same tensions as anger and is responsible for fifty-one physical ailments.

Fear is not usually caused by a single experience but becomes a habitual life style. Fearful people worry about almost anything that is new and different. A fearful person will inhibit himself vocationally, socially, educationally, and sexually. His family and his spiritual life will suffer greatly. Fear will stifle his conversation and communication in the home.

## II. DECISION MAKING

A. Mutual Agreement

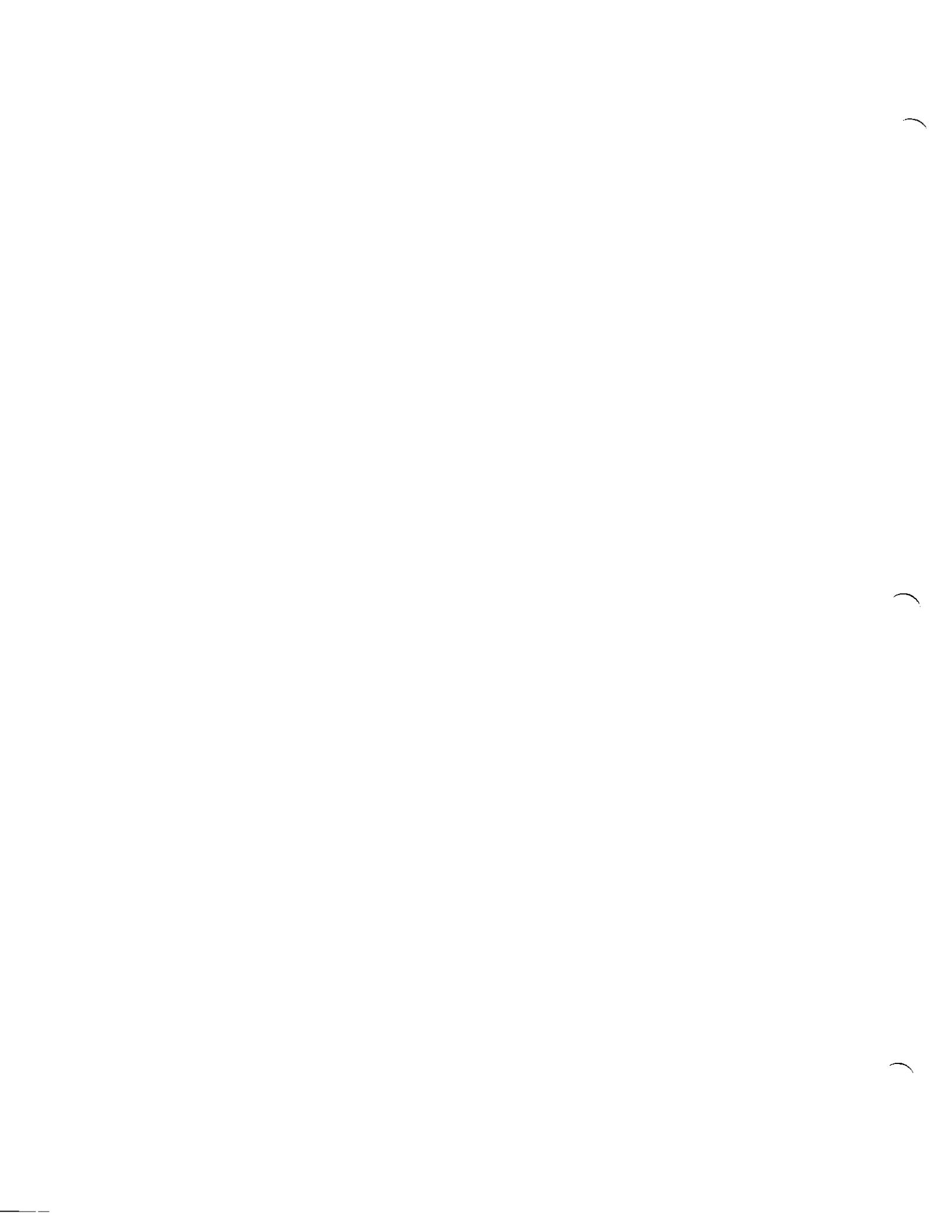
Plans of any consequence should always be discussed TOGETHER. The principle of submitting to each other in a marriage is similar to the pattern of submissiveness between the members of the body of Christ. There are times in the body when it is appropriate for one member to exercise leadership over other members, as a function of his or her spiritual gift (I Corinthians 12:14-26). No single spiritual gift automatically qualifies a member to be the leader or ultimate decision maker all of the time. That position belongs to the Head, Jesus Himself. Likewise in marriage, the role of decision making is not assigned according to some decree from God, or on the basis of "maleness" or "femaleness," but on the basis of mutual agreement. The skill of a Christian marriage lies in the negotiation and assignment of these leadership roles on the basis of each partner's ability.

B. Husband's Headship

In the marriage, the husband has the office of head. This simply means he has the responsibility and authority to guide the marriage. If he faithfully exercises his office, both he and his wife will be free to be themselves. As the head, the husband is called to take the lead in mutually examining the marriage to see if it is developing according to its long-range goals.

Clearly, headship is not being a boss. The husband can only command the wife to live up to what the two of them mutually pledged when they were married. Likewise, if the husband neglects his office, his wife ought to discreetly remind him of their mutual vows.

Neither does headship imply inferiority or superiority. Rather, headship is a special office of service so that the marriage may thrive and grow. Headship does not mean that the husband leads or decides in every detail. Once a man and woman have agreed on what their respective involvement will be in various decision areas, they can leave these decisions to the partner with the appropriate talents, temperament, and opportunity. The husband's role is to be on guard continually so that "little" things do not develop into the kinds of patterns that undermine the entire marriage.



Fears are a reaction that we must not allow to conquer and control us. Although certain basic temperaments are more fear-prone than others, fear must still be conquered. Fear can be cured the same way one would cure any other basic habit:

1. Face fear, worry, and anxiety as sin (Romans 14:23; II Timothy 1:7).
2. Confess worry, fear, and anxiety as sin (I John 1:9).
3. Ask God to take away your fear habit (I John 5:14, 15).
4. Be transformed by renewing your mind (Romans 12:2; I Peter 1:13; II Peter 3:1; I John 4:18).
5. Thank God for supplying your need in this problem (I Thessalonians 5:18).
6. Repeat this sequence every time you feel fearful (Galatians 6:9; II Thessalonians 3:13).

CHART-23

G. Steps To Resolving Conflicts

The following sequence may be used to resolve a family conflict:

1. Recognize conflict issues.
2. Listen carefully to the other person.
3. Select an appropriate time to talk.
4. Specifically define the conflict.
5. Identify your own contribution to the problem.
6. Think of several possible solutions.
7. Decide on a mutually acceptable solution.
8. Implement new behaviors.
9. Conclude with prayer for each other.



#### 4. Compromise

"Give a little to get a little" is called compromise. You may find that it is important to let up on some of your demands or ideas in order to help the other person give a little. You don't want to win all the time, nor do you want the other person to win all the time. To keep harmony in your marriage, you may have to compromise some of your own values.

#### 5. Resolve

A person may choose to resolve conflicts. In this style of dealing with conflicts, a situation, attitude, or behavior is changed by open and direct communication. Naturally, this is the style with highest value because the marriage relationship is strengthened and personal goals are also achieved. (See Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:15-18.)

CHART-22

#### F. Controlling Negative Emotions

Each of us is made up of negative and positive emotions. As we expose our true selves to each other, both will come to the forefront. We should be our true selves with each other, so our negative emotions can come out and we can deal with them effectively. When the negative emotions are verbalized, a quarrel erupts. The mature person is able to control his emotions and does not let his emotions control him. Since marriage is for adults only, each spouse should control his negative emotions. This allows us to lay aside any feelings which are impure and displeasing to God's will in our marriage.

##### 1. Anger

Even the most mature partners in marriage are going to experience conflicts. The Word of God allows for anger (righteous indignation), in Ephesians 4:26, 27, with three qualifications: (1) sin not; (2) let not the sun go down on your wrath; and (3) give no place to the devil. Righteous indignation is not sin because it is directed toward a particular circumstance. It is not directed toward ourselves (self-hatred) or toward our family members. Personal type anger is SIN and should not be expressed, but cured. Expressing anger only transforms our experiences into bad habits.

### 3. Opportunities For Growth

Conflicts are like dynamite. They can be helpful or destructive, depending on how they are used. Conflicts afford opportunities to change and grow. They also provide a "testing ground" for checking out our own strengths and resources. We might ask ourselves, "How do I feel inside during a conflict?" Then we may probe further, and ask ourselves, "Why do I feel this way?"

### 4. Possible Sources Of Stress

Unresolved conflicts interfere with growth and satisfying relationships. Defense mechanisms are activated and stress is placed on our marriage relationship. (See Ephesians 4: 26, 27.)

CHART-21

### E. Reactions To Conflicts

When there is disagreement, it is necessary to respect each other's opinions and ideas about the subject matter on which we disagree. Each has the right to his or her own opinions, ideas, attitudes, and convictions. This is a part of identity. Our attitude should allow our spouse the right of thinking for himself.

Marriage is not a reform school, nor is it an opportunity for one person to change another person to suit himself. Each person has a right to be an individual. No human being is going to stay the same after five years of marriage. One who is honest and motivated by love will change his characteristics to a better fusion with his spouse. Each spouse will accept the other's normal traits and characteristics and give consideration to them in their every day communication.

When conflicts arise—and they will—we have several ways of reacting to them. James Fairfield has suggested five reactions to conflicts:

Many young couples come into marriage with a preconceived fantasy of an ideal mate, or a perfect marriage. After a while, they realize that life just isn't that way, so they embark on a reform program and forget that only God can shape a life. They misconstrue the words of the wedding ceremony, "and the two shall become one," to mean that their mate should become like them and their fantasy. The oneness in marriage is not similarity, or sameness, but a oneness in understanding and purpose. While it is true we can never mold or remake another person, we can "allow" them to change. The following instruction can be applied to the marriage relationship:

"Living as becomes you—with complete lowliness of mind (humility) and meekness (unselfishness, gentleness, mildness), with patience, bearing with one another and making allowances because you love one another."

*Ephesians 4:2*  
*(Amplified Bible)*

### C. Acceptance

Every person who marries has characteristics similar to the one he marries. But he also has many characteristics that are different. Different ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and behaving are all part of marital adjustment. Difference is important because it holds the promise of fulfilling our needs with what the other partner has to offer. Consciously or subconsciously, people choose others who can help them feel complete. Opposites attract; likes repel when it comes to human temperament.

The very differences we need, however, contain the seeds for hurt and disruption. We are threatened by differences in our spouse. We are afraid that we might have to adjust our own way of thinking and doing things. We also believe that "if it's different, it's wrong." Many problems occur because of the lack of tolerance for differences of attitude or opinions in the marriage relationship. It is not our job to overhaul our mate, but to discover and learn the value of our differences. How humbling it is to realize that we need to yield to the desires of our partner, and thereby be changed.

We try to change our mate to conform to our ideal pattern for his life. So does God. But right there the similarity ends.

