



It is easier for two people to see eye to eye if they're on the level with each other.

Lesson 7

Dealing With the Differences

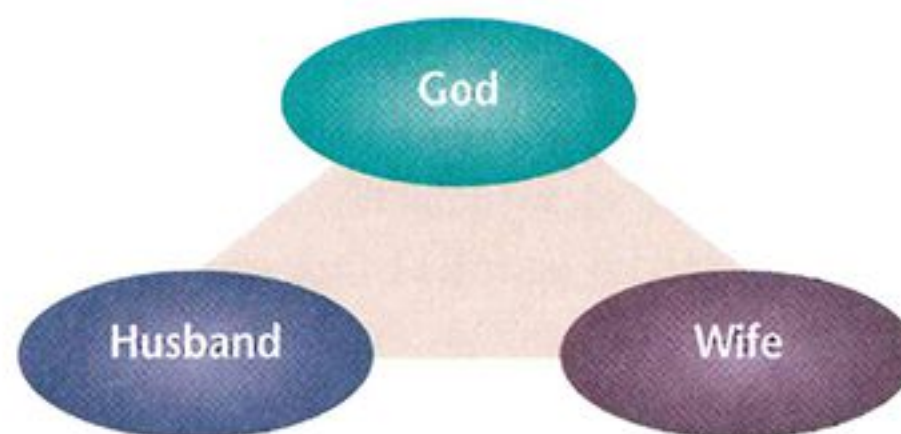
Did you know that generally . . .

- Men reach over their shoulders to pull off a sweater; women, around their ribs.
- Men pull gloves on from the front; women, from the back of their hand.
- Men turn their palms over to check their fingernails; women turn their palms down and straighten their fingers to check their nails.
- Men strike matches toward themselves; women, away.
- Men prefer brown paper bags; women, plastic.
- Women have better memory for where objects are; men have a more difficult time finding things.
- Women's basal metabolism is generally lower than men's—that's why women often feel colder than men.

Have you heard men are from Mars, and women are from Venus? That's not true. They're both from Eden. They may be very different, but they are merely two parts of the human being that God created to be one. "In His image" did not mean masculinity—even though we refer to God in the masculine form—or femininity. "In His image" means a combination of both the tougher sides of a man fueled by testosterone, and the softer sides of a woman bathed in estrogen.

God said it wasn't good for human beings to be alone. We infer from the context of this statement that God was talking about companionship. Alone, males or females only partially reflect God's image;

together they more completely reflect the Creator's image.



The marriage relationship is like a triangle with God at the top and husband and wife side-by-side at the bottom two points. The closer a husband and wife move toward God—or the more Christlike they become—the closer they grow to each other. God created Eve from Adam's rib, symbolizing a side-by-side relationship in which they would in love mutually submit, yield with

courtesy, and adapt to each other (Ephesians 5:21).

But what if a husband and wife don't always agree? Some suggest that God instituted a plan so there would never be an irreconcilable difference between a husband and wife. It was simply that wives were to submit to their husbands! (Ephesians 5:22-24). There are major flaws in this reasoning, however. First, it's an unreasonable burden to always place the responsibility of the final decision on a husband. Second, would God who created husband and wife equal, put a wife in a position to be the permanent loser in a marriage relationship? And third, God would never give a relational principle for married couples that would promote selfishness. If wives were always to submit when a conflict was irreconcilable, it would be easy for a husband to take advantage, knowing that if he was just stubborn enough, he would get his way. At the same time, wives who didn't want to take the responsibility for major decisions would have an automatic cop-out! How much better to experience growth through resolving conflict by these methods:

- Compromising.
- Deferring to each other, always striving to please, and creating opportunities to serve each other.
- Leaning toward the opinion of the person who is naturally gifted in that area of decision making, has the most knowledge, or whose life will be most affected by the decision.
- Praying together and waiting for God to bring the couple to a consensus.

- Initiating joint research to better understand what decision would be best.
- Deciding to defer to a third party who is trusted and knowledgeable.
- Engaging in role reversals, where each argues the opinion of the other. This helps each to see things from the other's point of view. (See Lesson 2 for an understanding of the term "head of the wife" in Ephesians 5:22-24.)

Love and Respect in the Marriage

In addition to mutual submission, the apostle Paul assigns different husband and wife roles in marriage: Husbands are to love their wives; wives are to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:25-30). Why is this gender distinction important?

God knew the gender traits that were common in men and women that would make it difficult for them to adapt to a spouse, so in His specific instructions to men and to women, He emphasized that which does not necessarily come easiest to each gender.

For example, women tend to love more easily than men. They find fulfillment when their emotional needs are met—and when they are meeting the emotional needs of others. Their identity is wrapped up in relationships—being a daughter, wife, or mother. In marriage, a woman feels loved when she is cherished by her husband.

In contrast, men tend to find fulfillment in competencies and achievement. How do they gauge whether or not they are competent? It is by the respect shown to them by

others. They feel loved when their wives respect them.

But God knew men would need a reminder to truly love—since showing emotional sensitivity doesn't usually come as easily for them. So in God's marriage manual, He highlighted the fact that a man was to be the leader in the love relationship. He was to nurture and express love unselfishly by putting the happiness of his wife before his own, as demonstrated by Christ's unselfish love for the church. God knew that because a woman more easily finds her fulfillment in emotionally satisfying relationships, it would be natural for her to submit to a husband's love and respect his loving leadership! That's why the husband's manual reads: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.... In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:25-30).

While loving comes more easily to women, God knew they would need a reminder to be respectful. And certainly one way to show respect to a husband would be to accept his loving leadership. So the marriage manual for women states: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to

their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Here's the success formula for a side-by-side, uniquely complementary marriage as God established in Eden. **Love and respect each other.** Specifically, "Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). The ideal is mutual love and respect, making sure that **husbands are to love, and wives are to respect!** This implies a corresponding responsibility: Both are to be lovable, and both are to be respectable! God created man to meet a woman's deepest longings and woman to meet a man's deepest needs. If this model is faithfully followed, differences become com-

Should men be "spiritual" leaders? Yes, if the word *spiritual* is not just defined as "religious." "Spiritual leader" is connected with the husband's headship. It goes far beyond religious instruction, discipline, moral behavior, and church attendance. A husband is the guardian/protector/nurturer of the "spirit" of his wife and children. A loving husband should be so tuned into the "spirit" (heart or emotions) of his wife and children that his desire is to rejoice with them when they are happy and comfort them when they are sad. Only by being "spiritually" responsible can a husband truly love his wife (and children) "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

If the husband is to give "spiritual" leadership, what role should the wife play? The wife was created to be a helpmeet to her husband in his role as "spiritual" leader. Because of her natural sensitivity to her own and others' feelings, if she senses an emotional need her husband is not aware of, she is to be honest and share this with him to help him better fulfill His God-given role. By working together the result is an emotionally or spiritually healthy family instead of a dysfunctional one.¹

plementary, and marriage satisfaction results.

How Biological Gender Differences Develop

Every cell in a man's body is different from a woman's because of chromosome patterns established at conception. But it's the release of testosterone (male hormone) and estrogen/progesterone (female hormones) at seven and eight weeks after conception that really determines differences in biology and thinking patterns. At seven weeks the male brain is bombarded with nearly ten times more testosterone, while on the eighth week, the female's brain is hit with great amounts of estrogen-progesterone. Then sixteen weeks after conception, the male brain is doused with a biochemical bath that severs most of the left-to-right brain transmission wires, or *corpus callosum*. This makes it more difficult for males to cross brain hemispheres when thinking. Instead, they tend to solve problems primarily with the left side of their brains, which is the more logical and analytical hemisphere, while women more easily use both hemispheres when thinking. Males who are predominately right-brained (which is the artistic, creative hemisphere) find conformity to society's expectations for orderly and logical thinking more difficult and are sometimes labeled learning disabled even though they are extremely bright.

A husband and a wife's different ways of thinking should complement each other rather than be a source of conflict. Generally, a man's brain is like a laser beam that is

able to focus on a goal or persevere toward winning. The disadvantage is that while a man tunes into goals and getting things done, he may tune out relationships and become insensitive and detached from others—including a wife and children.

A woman's brain tends to react more like radar—aware of everything around her. A baby's cry, the doorbell, the cat scratching on the back door, or a friend in need of help. Women are often more nurturing and have what's called "emotional immediacy." If a need exists, it must be satisfied!

The differences in the way males and females think is reflected in the way they communicate (see Lesson 9), and if these differences aren't understood and respected, they can lead to major conflict.

Knowledge of biological gender differences and the role hormones play in behavior differences can help husbands and wives better understand each other. For example, understanding the relationship between personality changes and the menstrual cycle can often help couples live together more comfortably. If a husband thinks his wife is moody as an individual, he will work to reform her. If he understands that some of her moodiness is because of her biological construction, he is better able to accept this behavior as one of the differences between the sexes.

Gender Role Expectations

All of us grow up making certain gender-role assumptions that can cause stress and frustration in a marriage. These life expectations are taught to us by society and our

families of origin. For example, when George and Becky got married, Becky without question made her husband number one in her life. She would have given up anything for her marriage. It nearly destroyed her to realize, however, that she was often number two in George's life. It was as if he had to maintain two marriages: one to her and one to his vocation. When she complained, he explained, "I have to put work first. How could I expect you to love me if I can't be successful at work?"

Is Becky right in elevating George to number-one position in her life? No. This is a position reserved only for Christ. When she is secure in the knowledge of God's love, her identity will not depend on how much "attention" she receives from George. She will be able to make her needs known in a loving, mature way. If George disregards her insights, this would be an appropriate time to obtain marital counseling with a pastor or therapist.

A man who has grown up with the gender-role expectation that it's the man's responsibility to be the main financial support of the family, may, at times, experience pressure trying to be successful in his career and at the same time meet his family's needs. Fortunately, men are now learning how to prioritize their lives so their families don't have to suffer. And women are learning how to communicate their needs and support their husbands during stressful times.

On the opposite side, a woman can grow up with the gender-role expectation that dictates she must be equally successful carry-

ing the double responsibility of family and career, not realizing that certain stages of child rearing can be extremely demanding. Too many women driven by this super-woman life expectation neglect themselves and their marriages. If this woman is married to a man who believes the gender-role expectation that a wife should be there to meet her husband's needs, or that a woman shouldn't work outside the home when the children are small, the sparks will likely fly!

A woman who has grown up with the gender-role expectation that a woman's job is to keep the house clean can strain the marriage relationship by her constant pursuit of order. Sarah was constantly cleaning, picking up, mopping, vacuuming, and washing. Joe wanted a comfortable home where he could live, not a showplace or museum. He wanted a wife who would go places with him whether or not the dishes were washed and the laundry folded.

Next door, Connie and Bruce experienced their own conflicts with similar gender-role expectations. Connie was gifted with creativity, often working on two or three projects at once, but she cared little about housework. The problem was that Bruce grew up with the gender-role expectation that cleanliness was next to godliness—and it was the woman's job to keep the house orderly.

Can you see the conflict that gender-role expectations can inflict on a marriage—and the importance of reexamining these expectations in the light of your own marriage rather than blindly adopting what society or family may have taught you?

Add the differences in temperaments to our biological differences and the different gender-role expectations, and it's easy to see how, without the love and respect God commanded that a husband and wife should have for each other, marriage relationships can quickly become hostile and combative!

When Opposites Attract

There is no doubt that marriages have a significantly better chance to be successful if the couple is similar in age, racial and cultural backgrounds, education, spirituality, and interests. But when it comes to temperaments, the fact is that opposites attract. Some might even argue that couples don't really marry for love; they marry to complete their own personalities. A quiet person marries a talkative one, a socially outgoing person marries an introvert, a leader marries a follower, a doer marries a dreamer, a miser marries a spender, a sentimentalist marries a pragmatist. And for about six months or so, everything is fine. But as the honeymoon wears off, the differences that were once a completion of each other's personalities now become an irritant. Problems begin when one tries to change the other.

Allan was determined to change Jill's outgoing, impulsive, vibrant personality into a more stable, responsible one like his. He tore her down, told her what to do, and threatened her if she didn't shape up. One day his pastor said, "Allan, don't crush the flower in Jill." Allan was so busy trying to change Jill that he hadn't noticed that her spontaneous, happy nature was disappearing. When Allan began to love his wife for the

person she was, instead of trying to change her into someone like himself, the bubbly personality that he had fallen in love with returned. In the process Jill began to respect Allan and determined to work on becoming more responsible.²

It is said that if your husband or wife is a different person after marriage than the one you married, it may be your fault. In trying to make him or her over, you destroy the very person you fell in love with!

If couples shouldn't try to change their mates, how can they deal with the differences? Understanding the different temperaments and accepting them is something that every married couple must work through—if they have married their opposites—as many do.

Your temperament is your natural disposition. It's a behavioral style that affects your manner of thinking, feeling, and acting—and is reflected in your personality. A person's temperament usually doesn't change. With motivation and determination, it is possible to change certain weaknesses, but it's only behavior that has changed. Your basic temperament remains the same, so don't be surprised if you or your partner at times reverts back to some old habit patterns!

There are many different ways to categorize temperaments, but the oldest and best-known method highlights four: **sanguine** (the happy, pleasure-loving person), **choleric** (the strong-willed leader and sometimes controller), **melancholy** (the sensitive perfectionist who has a tendency toward sadness and depression), and **phlegmatic**

(the easy-going, peace-loving, and sometimes indifferent individual).

Obviously human behavior is much more complex than just four temperaments and their various combinations. God, throughout the history of this world, has never created two individuals who were exactly the same—not even identical twins; how could people be so bold as to attempt to put each other into a few boxes?

But as simplistic as these four temperament categories are, couples who understand them can better understand themselves and their mates. They can also understand how they could change in order to foster a more satisfying marriage relationship.

What do you do when opposites attract?

First of all, accept it. Couples can have a dynamic, exciting, passionate marriage and be totally opposite in temperaments—if they truly love and respect each other and don't try to make the other change to do things the "right" way according to them. This, of course, is easier said than done.

Second, if couples do choose to marry someone who has a different temperament, then they will have to work harder on making sure their marriage doesn't become trapped in the mire of misunderstanding and the resentment of these differences. This may mean couples should dialogue each day about their growing relationship, read books about communication or problem solving, and put the techniques they learn into practice. Taking marriage-

enrichment courses together can keep their marriage vital, and if the going gets rough, professional counseling can bring valuable insights and help. Marrying someone who has a similar temperament doesn't assure marital bliss; it simply makes marriage adjustment easier.

Here are descriptions of each of the four temperaments:

Sanguine

Magie is sanguine. She loves to have a good time and be the center of attention. Her motivation for living is to have fun. She's outgoing, talkative, friendly, optimistic, enthusiastic, cheerful, spontaneous, creative, sincere, and curious, and she has a good sense of humor. Magie gets angry easily, but she doesn't hold grudges. She's people oriented, spontaneously touching others and inspiring them.

Magie's a lot of fun to date because she's the life of the party, but the person she marries is going to have to put up with her childlike, forgetful, and sometimes impulsive personality. She appears to be irresponsible because she makes decisions based on circumstances.

Magie needs to work on thinking of others before herself. She needs to try making people feel special by remembering their names and birthdays and by taking the time to really listen to them rather than doing all the talking. She needs to carry her fair share of responsibility and learn to stick with a project until it's finished, even though it may no longer be fun. If Magie would spend a little more time planning, getting organized, and paying more attention to details,

chances are she would make the man she marries a lot happier.

Choleric

Carolyn is a choleric. She's goal oriented, enjoys getting things done, and at times borders on being a workaholic. She's well-organized and is a natural leader who enjoys delegating work and is good at motivating others. She's usually confident, dynamic, active, strong-willed, independent, not easily discouraged, practical, impatient, unemotional, and at times bossy and controlling. She enjoys controversy and has little need of friends. She tends to see the whole picture and can, therefore, figure out quickly what needs to be done. She's a great person to have around in an emergency.

The man who marries her is going to wish she weren't quite so bossy and would accept the fact that no one is perfect. There will be times he's going to wish she would apologize and say, "I'm sorry," when she's wrong—and would stop pressuring him into performing at her own standard.

Carolyn needs to learn to relax, cultivate patience, take time to make friends, and to express her convictions in ways that don't offend.

Melancholy

Curtis is a very sensitive, deep thinker with a perfectionistic bent. He's melancholy. He's analytical, conscientious, idealistic, and artistic, enjoying details and beautiful things. He's also economical and self-sacrificing. Because Curtis takes things so seriously, he gets easily depressed, pessimistic, suspicious of others, and tearful. Curtis avoids attracting attention and is content to stay in the

background. He makes friends cautiously; but once friendships are made, he's devoted to them, always willing to listen and to help.

The woman who marries Curtis is going to wish he would learn to enjoy every day, be more spontaneous and forgiving, and do things that are pleasurable, including taking time to make friends.

Curtis's negative thinking may frustrate a wife, so Curtis needs to work on thinking positively, counting his blessings, expressing thanks, and resisting the temptation to spread bad news. Living with a perfectionist isn't easy. She's going to wish he would just accept himself and others unconditionally and wouldn't become discouraged with imperfection.

Phlegmatic

Tad is phlegmatic. He's a peace-loving, conflict-avoiding observer. He's patient, sympathetic, kind, and inoffensive. He is quiet and dislikes change. Tad has dozens of friends because he is so easy to get along with and takes time to talk and listen. Because he is steady and not easily upset, Tad is good under pressure.

If Tad marries a doer, she's going to be frustrated when he doesn't seem to be pulling his fair share. He'll need to practice being observant about what needs to be done and not put off doing the things on his wife's "to do" list. He'll also find marriage a lot happier when he chooses to solve problems when they arise. He'll need to practice talking through problems rather than retreating from them and sharing negative feelings rather than bottling them up. He'll be a more attractive husband if he

learns to show some motivation and enthusiasm for living, is willing to try new things, and openly expresses positive emotions.

In the four temperament sketches, did you find one or two that seem to be fairly descriptive of yourself? If so, it can be instructive to learn what the potential problems might be if you would marry someone of a different temperament. Let's look at some of these combinations described in the book, *When You're Serious About Love*.³

The sanguine and choleric: The sanguine wants to have a good time while the choleric wants to get things done. The sanguine is impulsive, childlike, and forgetful while the choleric is organized, practical, and bossy. Can you see areas of possible conflict?

The sanguine and melancholy: While the sanguine says, "If we've got to do it, let's have fun," the melancholy says, "If we do it, then let's do it right!" Sanguines are energized by people, and melancholies feel drained after contact with a lot of people.

The sanguine and phlegmatic: The sanguine is impulsive and outgoing. The phlegmatic doesn't like to try new things and may be more introverted. While the sanguine is talkative and willing to share feelings, the phlegmatic may be the opposite, bottling up negative feelings and avoiding problem solving. These differences can cause misunderstandings if they aren't recognized.

The choleric and melancholy: The choleric and melancholy may be more alike than some of the other temperaments, because they both like to see things get done, but they can tangle if the choleric is

interested in the practical way to get things done immediately and the melancholy insists on perfection regardless of how long it takes.

The choleric and phlegmatic: Here is a real potential for conflict. The choleric is a doer; the phlegmatic is not. The choleric leaves the house in the morning, expecting that certain things will be accomplished by the phlegmatic, and they don't get done. Too often this leads to nagging, bossy behavior. The phlegmatic isn't as open about feelings and tries to avoid conflict by not saying anything, but internal resentment begins to build. Over the years the phlegmatic's affection turns to hostility. Once this happens, it is very difficult to restore that original love relationship. This can be a problem when the wife is choleric and naturally assumes a leadership position and the husband feels that even though he is phlegmatic, he should be the head of the household! Mutual respect is the stuff that holds a choleric/phlegmatic marriage together.

The melancholy and phlegmatic: Both melancholies and phlegmatics are more introverted in personalities, but they have some basic differences. The phlegmatic is usually more positive; the melancholy tends toward the pessimistic. Another conflict might be the manner in which projects are completed. The melancholy is a conscientious doer, paying attention to details and making sure things are done right. The phlegmatic couldn't care less! Can you see the melancholy partner following around the phlegmatic, picking up after him or her

and retouching projects that the phlegmatic considered done? I can almost hear the complaining of the melancholy, "Can't you ever do anything right?" And if you listen carefully you could hear the phlegmatic lamenting, "Why can't you just accept me the way I am?"

Marrying someone with a different temperament can make life interesting and challenging. Just make sure you date each other long enough to see each other in as many different situations as possible, so you have a pretty good idea about how your temperaments mesh.

A Word of Warning

Within the first seven years, almost all marriages experience what is termed the "dip." It may come on slowly, like the setting of the sun, or it may be that one day it just hits—like lightning. Regardless, the dip is characterized by the husband and wife looking at each other and asking, "Why did we get married? We're so different!" The excitement is gone, communication is routine, differences are exaggerated, and life together is boring. They realize that some expectations when they got married will probably never be realized, and an irresistible urge comes over them to change each other.

When that happens, resist the "irresistible urge" and refer back to God's owner's manual for dealing with the differences. First, practice mutual submission by continuing to love and respect each other (Ephesians 5:21). Specifically, men, love your wives! And women, respect your husbands! (Ephesians

5:33). It's the only way out of the dip. And the view on the other side is fantastic!

Anchor Text

"Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

Bible Search

1. A relational model from the Godhead

The Godhead is three entities, each with different roles but one in purpose and love. How they relate to each other can be a model for the husband-and-wife relationship that is often talked about as being a "one flesh" relationship. The book of John gives the clearest insight into the relationship of the Godhead.

Leadership in the Godhead

Many of us assume that to be a leader means to exercise authority, act independently, make decisions, impose them on others, promote the leader's will, and bring glory to his or her name. We think anything less than this suggests inferiority.

But in Jesus' estimation, all of these posturings are evidence of sin. He cites His dependence on the Father, His submission and obedience to the Father, as the highest evidence of His equality with the Father.

"Christ's position *under* the Father was the surest evidence that He was *beside* the Father. His *subjection* to the Father was the greatest evidence of His *equality* with the Father."⁴

A. Premise 1: Jesus is God.

Look up the following texts: What does each say about Jesus' relationship to God?

- (1) John 20:28, 29.
- (2) With one sentence compare Exodus 3:14 with Jesus' use of "I Am" in John 4:26; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19.
- (3) Write a one-sentence summary of the basic message in these texts: John 12:45; 14:9; 12:44; 8:19; 5:23; 15:23, 24; 10:30; 17:11, 22.

B. Premise 2: The lifestyle of the Godhead is mutual submission.

What is the relationship between Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit? Look up the following texts and write a one-sentence summary for each member of the Godhead.

(1) Jesus

John 14:28; 5:19, 30.

(2) Holy Spirit

John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13, 14.

(3) Father (What is the thought of each of the following texts?)

- a. John 5:17.
- b. John 5:20.
- c. John 14:6.
- d. John 5:22.
- e. John 3:35; 13:3.

In summary...

"The Trinity is characterized by mutual-ity. Leadership is fluid, passing from one to the other, and the three members make joint decisions and derive fulfillment from

carrying them out. Each affirms and glorifies the others. The secret of this unity is love."⁵

After studying the Godhead, which represents three in one, what implications do you think their relationship could have on marriage, which is to be two people in one? Answer in two or three sentences.

2. Counsel for unity and harmonious relationships

Read Ephesians 4 and 5 and summarize the counsel given in the following texts that will help married couples have a meaningful and harmonious relationship.

- A. Ephesians 4:1-3.
- B. Ephesians 4:11-13.
- C. Ephesians 4:15.
- D. Ephesians 4:25.
- E. Ephesians 4:26.
- F. Ephesians 4:29.
- G. Ephesians 4:31, 32.
- H. Ephesians 5:2-5.
- I. Ephesians 5:8-11.
- J. Ephesians 5:18.
- K. Ephesians 5:19, 20.
- L. Ephesians 5:21-33.

Endnotes

1. Adapted from Ken Nair, *Discovering the Mind of a Woman* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995).
2. Adapted from Allan and Jill Kennedy, *Longing to Be Loved* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1997).
3. Kay Kuzma, *When You're Serious About Love* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 89-91.
4. Unpublished paper by Randolph E. Neall, quoted in Beatrice S. Neall, "The Debate on How to Relate," *Adventist Review*, January 1995, 21.
5. Beatrice S. Neall, "The Debate on How to Relate," *Adventist Review*, January 1995, 22.
6. Adapted from Allan Kennedy, *Life Choices* (Athens, Tenn.: Life Training, Inc., 1998).

Reaction

Discussion Questions

1. How can there be equality in the family if the husband assumes the leadership role and the wife the submission role?
2. What are some of the interesting differences between men and women? Which ones could be especially troublesome to a marriage relationship?
3. Which differences between men and women are cultural, not biological?
4. Why is success in the career generally so important to a man? How should a wife relate to this if her husband is leaning toward workaholism?
5. Why do opposites attract?
6. What would you consider the most troublesome temperament combinations for a marriage?
7. What problems would a couple face if they both had the same temperaments?

Personal Response

Now is the time to begin living the lifestyle that will be conducive to a harmonious marriage relationship. What counsel in Ephesians 4 and 5 are things that I could start working on in my life today?

Practical Application

1. Gender-Role Expectations

Life expectations are messages given early in a person's life that become rules for behavior. Many parents give boys certain messages and girls other messages that end up becoming gender-role expectations. For example, read the following:

Gender-Role Expectations

The messages parents give boys and girls during their growing years can push the God-intended differences of a male or female to extremes. Boys are often told, "Be strong! Don't be helpful; someone might get an edge on you. Argue, show tension; it will keep the other guy on guard. Be competitive, even combative; nice guys never win. Take care of yourself; don't think the other guy is going to take care of you! Figure out what you want and go after it. Don't do it if someone else can do it for you. Don't cry."

Girls are often told such things as, "Be nice! Be helpful; above all, don't be selfish. Help people feel good about themselves. Don't

show tension—relieve it. Be collaborative, not competitive. Be warm, loving, nurturing. Be compliant, accepting, understanding. Don't say no; it's not nice. Don't bother people; if you want something, do it or get it yourself."⁶

When the above messages come from society and family, they can become life expectations as well.

- A. What expectations concerning your role as a boy or girl were you given as a child?
- B. Will they foster good marriage relationships or tend to tear them down?
- C. If negative, what can you do to change your gender-role expectations?

2. Dysfunctional Gender Roles

The following are some "traditional" gender roles that men and women might bring into marriage that could prove problematic:

Dysfunctional masculine roles:

1. Leads a life of exaggerated independence rather than admitting that he needs anything from anyone.
2. Denies the experience and expression of fears.
3. Avoids disclosing his inner feelings to women because he is afraid it is unmasculine.
4. Keeps emotions to himself for fear of becoming vulnerable.
5. Hides from failure by wearing the facade of a successful man.
6. Denies "feminine" qualities such as expressing warmth and tenderness.

Dysfunctional feminine roles:

1. Trained to want and need intimacy in a relationship.
2. Takes care of everybody but herself.
3. Doesn't express negative feelings or emotions. Will not argue, reject, or challenge.
4. Expresses herself by being proper, personal, emotional, and indirect.
5. Trained to be emotionally "there" for her partner twenty-

four hours a day.

6. Taught to be sensitive to non-verbal cues so that she can "read" the men in her life.

- A. Choose three masculine roles and three feminine roles and discuss how they could cause problems in marriage.
- B. If someone has grown up with dysfunctional gender roles, what could a person do to change these before marriage?