



We Are Different

Adapted from “Family Power” series by Wayne Murray

If you have been around other people for any length of time, it is not long before you will notice that men and women are different. Men and women think differently, act differently, look differently, and communicate differently. Read the following article from the book *If Only He Knew*:

I would venture to say that most marital difficulties center around one fact. Men and women are TOTALLY different. The differences (emotional, mental, and physical) are extreme. Without a *concentrated effort* to understand them, it is nearly impossible to have a happy marriage. A famous psychiatrist once said, “After thirty years of studying women, I ask myself, ‘What is it that they really want?’” If this was his conclusion, just imagine how little we know about our wives.

You may already be aware of some of the differences. Many, however, will come as a complete surprise. Did you know, for instance, that every cell in a man’s body has a chromosome makeup entirely different from those in a woman’s body?

How about this next one? Dr. James Dobson says there is strong evidence indicating the “seat” of the emotions in a man’s brain is wired differently than in a woman’s. By virtue of these two differences, men and women are miles apart emotionally and physically. Let’s examine some of the differences between men and women.

MENTAL/EMOTIONAL DIFFERENCES:

Women tend to be more personal than men.

Women have a deeper interest in people and feelings—in building relationships. Men tend to be more preoccupied with practicalities that can be understood through logical deduction. Men tend to be more challenge-and-conquer oriented—competing for dominance. Hence, you see their strong interest in sports such as football and boxing.

Why would a woman be less interested in a boxing match? It's because close, loving relationships are usually not developed in the ring! Also, watch what happens during many family vacations. He is challenged by the goal of driving 400 miles a day. On the other hand, she wants to stop now and then to drink coffee, relax and relate. He thinks that's a waste of time because it would interfere with his goal.

Men tend to be less desirous and knowledgeable in building intimate relationships, both with God and with others.

For example, women are usually the ones who buy marriage books. They are usually the ones who develop the initial interest in knowing God and attending church. When a man realizes his wife is more naturally motivated to nurture relationships, he can relax. He feels he can accept these tendencies.

Do you realize that your wife's natural ability for developing relationships can *help* you fulfill the two greatest commandments taught by Christ? I'm talking about loving God and loving others (*Matt 22:36-40*). Jesus said that if we obey these two commandments, we are fulfilling *all* the commandments. Think of it! Your wife has the God-given drive and ability to help you build meaningful relationships in both of these areas.

God knew you needed special help. He stated, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper [and completer] suitable for him" (*Genesis 2:18*). If you let her, your wife can open up a new world of communication and deeper relationships.

Dr. Cecil Osborne, in his book *The Art of Understanding Your Mate*, said women become *an intimate part* of the people they know and the things that surround them. They enter into a kind of "oneness" with their environment. Though a man relates to people and situations, his identity is not usually entwined with them. He somehow remains apart. That's why a woman, viewing her house as an extension of herself, can be hurt when it's criticized by others.

Women tend to find their identity in close relationships. Men tend to gain their identity through vocations.

Because of a woman's emotional identity with people and places around her, she needs more time to adjust to change. She sees that changes may affect her relationships. A man can logically deduce the benefits of a change. He gets

“psyched-up” for it in a matter of minutes. This is not so, with a woman. She focuses on immediate consequences, and needs time to overcome the initial adjustment before warming up to its advantages.

Men tend to express their hostility through physical violence. Women tend to be more verbally expressive.¹

¹ Gary Smalley and Steve Scott, *If Only He Knew: What No Woman Can Resist*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988).

COURAGE

C1: Not only does science have a lot to share about differences between men and women, the Bible has much to say about the differences and how to create a synergy in your relationship with your spouse by mutual submission.

Ephesians 5:21 (NLT) And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- What does this verse say to you?
- Write out what submission means to you.

C2: Quarrels, arguments, and disagreements are part of any relationship. Read the following verses:

Proverbs 10:12 (NLT) Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love makes up for all offenses.

Proverbs 17:14 (NLT) Starting a quarrel is like opening a floodgate, so stop before a dispute breaks out.

Proverbs 18:6 (NLT) Fools' words get them into constant quarrels; they are asking for a beating.

James 4:1 (NLT) What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?

- What do these verses say to you about quarrels and arguments?
- In your relationship, do you find yourself prone to quarrels and arguments? Write out a plan to improve in this area.

C3: In a healthy functional family relationship, each person can express themselves at the age-appropriate correct manner. In a dysfunctional family relationship, no one other than the dictator is allowed to decide what will be the orders of the day.

- On a scale of 1-8, with 1 being dysfunctional and 8 being functional, what number would you give your family relationship? What trigger points would you attribute to your numeric response?

STRENGTH

S1: When persons get married they come into the relationship as two independent persons. Our tendency is to claim certain parts of the relationship and this is where one spouse or both spouses begin to assert their dominance. The psychological definition of the word dominance is the disposition of an individual to assert control in dealing with others.

In relationships, there are at least three types of dominance. One type is global. This is where one person runs every issue in the relationships. Another type of dominance is selective. One spouse has control over the finances and one controls the children and spirituality. Finally, a seasonal dominance is asserted. In a certain season in the life of the marriage, one spouse takes control for whatever reason.²

Matthew 19:4-6 (NLT)

- What do these verses speak to you in light of the idea of dominance?
- Write down what verse 6 means to you.

S2: Psychologists confirm what the Bible teaches. The University of Washington psychology professor John Gottman developed an Oral History Interview “that predicts with 87% accuracy which newlywed couples will remain married and which will divorce four to six years later.” The conclusion was:

The happiest couples are speaking almost in one voice because they are so tuned into each other’s wants and desires. These people know the value of their partner in their life and know they are not out to get them. It is really beautiful music. With the unhappiest couples, there is no symmetry. There is no respect for each other. Individuals are really nasty with each other and they struggle to find positive things to say about each other or the relationship.³

² Dictionary.com

³ Joel Swartz “UW researchers can predict newlywed divorce, marital stability with 87 percent accuracy,” March 27, 2000, <http://www.washington.edu/news/2000/03/27/uw-researchers-can-predict-newlywed-divorce-marital-stability-with-87-percent-accuracy/> (accessed July 26, 2017).

- What does this data say about the power of mutual submission?
- On a scale from 1-4, with 1 as the lowest and 4 as the highest, how well do you and your spouse submit to one another? Write out a plan to improve by 1 in the next ninety days.

S3: Paul describes the marriage relationship in Ephesians. Read **Ephesians 5:21-33 (NLT)**.

- According to verse 23 the husband is to be the “head” of the wife. Write out what this means to you.
- According to these verses, what is the responsibility of the husband?
- According to these verses, how should the husband love his wife?

ENDURANCE

E1: Equality suggests that each person has rights and they insist on their rights being fulfilled. In Ephesians 5, Paul is not talking about equality but about mutual submission. Read what he says in **Ephesians 5:21-33 (NLT)**.

- Write out what mutual submission in a relationship means to you.
- Write out what equality in a relationship means to you.
- Write out what dominance means to you.
- Circle which style you lean towards

Dominance
1

Equality
2 3

Mutual Submission
4

- How can you work towards mutual submission in your relationship?

E2: To have a healthy, growing relationship, a healthy, growing spiritual life is needed. Paul provides a grid to judge our spiritual growth. As many pastors have seen, the biggest challenge for the American church is spiritual immaturity. We may go to church but we do not pray, have a consistent Bible reading, or feed ourselves spiritually. If spiritual immaturity is in the church it stands to reason an immaturity will be in our relationships. Read the following and answer the questions.

Galatians 5:22-26 (NLT)

- Rate yourself on a scale from 1-4, with 1 being least and 4 being most on the different fruit listed. Which ones do you need to continue to develop?

- Make yourself a chart for each fruit. For the next ninety days, write a number between 1-4 every day before bed on how well you displayed your fruit that day.
- Talk to your spouse about your goal to improve and grow spiritually healthy.

E3: In order to be mutually submissive, we must choose to be interdependent on one another. This is hard for many of us because we have been taught to take care of ourselves. Being independent communicates to your spouse you do not need them nor do respect them. Set down with your spouse to discuss what it means to be interdependent. Then, decide you will never act independently but interdependently with each other. Write out a prayer together for interdependence. Commit for the next ninety days to pray this prayer together weekly for five out of seven days.