

Giving Up Changing Your Spouse into an Exact Copy of You

Acceptance is especially necessary in the first stages of a relationship. It is like learning a new language. We will be considering some of the main obstacles in this process (emotional, moral, and spiritual factors) and how to overcome them. Trying to change your spouse into a copy of you is one of the most frequent and unconscious mistakes in the marital relationship. Mature acceptance renounces the fantasy of the *ideal* spouse to focus on the beauty of the *real* partner.

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Acceptance is like learning a new language. It requires effort, time and, above all, a good motivation.

I. Why is it so difficult?

A mixture of emotional, moral, and spiritual reasons (Jer. 17:9):

1. A deceitful mind:

We have a tendency to extreme views of our neighbor:

- First we idealize: we only see the positive (projections)
- Then we reject: we only see the negative
- Maturity means seeing both the positive and the negative

Realism is the antidote against the fantasies of marriage as a “Disneyworld experience”

2. Wrong expectations

a. About marriage: What did you think marriage was like?

b. About the spouse: We are all “jars of clay”. No one is pure gold!

3. Lack of flexibility

We have tendency to make others a copy of ourselves. Being rigid makes us unable to endure the difference.

4. A deceitful heart: our blind spots

Discovering “The beam in our own eye”

- Unconscious superiority?: My own way is not always better, it is simply different
- Unaware of my own selfishness? Lacking grace and mercy.

II. Our resources:

Acceptance is difficult, but it is not impossible. Among others, it requires three tools:

1. Humility: a right self-concept. Pride is the worst enemy to accepting your spouse.
2. Work: diligence to practice the “*work of love*”.
 - A love that is willing to listen and understand: empathy
 - A love that is patient: perseverance
 - A love that embraces with open arms
3. Prayer: dependency on God’s supernatural power. Prayer is the channel through which the divine sap flows. This sap enables us to accept because He accepted us first.

Prayer changes situations as much it changes us. Our spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10:4-5) are the ultimate resource to grow into mutual acceptance.

*God, grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference¹*

¹ The authorship of this so-called Serenity Prayer is attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, German theologian.