

Mutual Acceptance in Marriage: The Quiet Weapon of Love

Mutual acceptance in marriage is a sign of maturity and a requisite for a long lasting and healthy relationship. Accepting does not primarily mean understanding or agreeing with. Acceptance means “*receiving one another*” in the deepest sense, as Christ did with us (Romans 15:7). Distorted views of acceptance may hinder this mutual “receiving”. This is why we need to consider what acceptance is and what it is not in the light of Christ’s example.

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Introduction

Mutual acceptance is a sign of emotional and spiritual maturity in Christian life (Romans 14-15).

Likewise it becomes one of the pillars of marriage together with communication and intimacy. The lack of acceptance makes a marriage fragile. The more acceptance grows, the stronger the marriage becomes. A long-lasting and healthy relationship greatly relies on mutual acceptance.

I. Understanding what acceptance is and what it is not

A. Some distorted: views:

1. Acceptance is not *agreeing with*: there is a place for diversity in unity.
2. Acceptance is not “*cheap grace*”: you cannot say O.K. when it is not O.K.
3. Acceptance does not mean *understanding everything*.

B. What acceptance is:

1. Acceptance celebrates the *difference as a divine gift* (the gift of diversity)
2. Acceptance *focuses on the complementarity*, the “suitable help” (Gen. 2:20)
3. Acceptance leads to “*receiving one another*” not *in spite of* our differences but *together* with them (Romans 15:7).
4. Acceptance means being ready “*to agree that we disagree*”
5. Acceptance means renouncing to change your spouse into a copy of you.

C. The evidence of acceptance:

1. Acceptance produces mutual respect and enriches the relationship
2. Acceptance brings a deep sense of freedom and wellbeing
3. Acceptance brings forth closeness and trust
4. The lack of acceptance is shown in hypercriticism, judging unduly and, ultimately, rejection. It leads to separation and division; walls of rejection grow where there is no acceptance.

II. Models that help

- A. The father of the Prodigal Son: open arms, but not approval of the wrong behaviour
- B. Boaz and Ruth: acceptance looks high and far, not only the “here and now.” Great blessing is the outcome.
- C. Christ’s acceptance: our supreme model (Romans 15:7)
- D. Ultimately acceptance is a matter of love and mercy, a love that embraces the imperfect and a mercy that supports the weaker.

III. A time to accept, a time to correct: Acceptance is not a blank check

- A. Acceptance does not exclude correcting. Changing is also loving. Jesus fully accepted and loved His disciples, but he corrected them when it was needed.
- B. *Marriage is a school of learning*, and, therefore, of changing. There is a place for mutual learning and modelling in the relationship. Growing together as disciples of Christ is one of the great privileges and joys of marriage.
- C. Correcting the fault does not mean rejecting the person.