

## A Tale of One Love

**W**omen think differently than men. Their brains are apparently wired differently. Dr. Abram Maslow (1908-1970) spoke of a psychological difference between men and women. Is this why men have a hard time understanding their own wives and wives think that their husbands never listen?

In the beginning God made a wife a “help” meet for her husband [Genesis 2:18] not only making her contribution to the marriage a necessity but a blessing [Proverbs 18:22]. Whatever that “help” was before our first parents were escorted out of Paradise, it was in contrast to their relationship afterward in which he became her master [Hosea 2:16]. Before sin they were equals—partners—in a spousal union we cannot even imagine without, possibly, decades of controversy, compromise, and hurt feelings. Here was the first Tower of Babel where two people didn’t want to reach God but be like God, and the Lord confounded their language. What they lost was a promised oneness that was guaranteed to enrich their happiness together. Many couples, consequently, become emotionally impoverished going into a marriage that could not deliver on its promises—sadly leading them to admit that they felt more alone than before.

There is, however, a bridge to build between these two minds, a bridge of communication, and it may take years to build it. In a metaphorical sense, it is as if God decided that spouses should begin apart on separate sides of a great chasm that now must be bridged for them to meet. At least, we must admit that the greater the price we pay for something, the greater its value when we get it! We build that bridge through intimacy, often risking the pain of misunderstanding and even disapproval. No one gives themselves up to an intimate moment without exposing deep and personal feelings. And if it is the wrong relation, they may never get the feelings back! This is why intimacy in physical relationship is a form of communication tending toward oneness, even “if” with the wrong partner [1 Corinthians 6:16]. Wrong relations is wasting emotional and mental resources on the wrong bridge!

But why do I want a heterosexual relationship if understanding my partner is such a chore? Well, staying with the metaphor, there are things on the other side of that divide that are important to me. The problem is that the benefits of a marriage between a man and a woman are separated by great emotional and mental differences, and communication is the only way to bridge that divide. Heterosexual spouses are speaking different languages. The words sound similar but are nuanced differently and are often gender specific in meaning. Learning each other’s thought processes—language—opens up vistas of possibilities. When couples begin to really understand each other and appreciate this difference, they begin to co-operate, and they become an irreplaceable support to one another. The fact that her favorite color is yellow is incidental; what is important is that it is *her* color! Do you know why?

Heterosexual marriages admittedly at times, sadly, find it too challenging and risky to communicate truthfully and honestly with one another. In a monogamy one’s entire investment is in this one relationship. That is increased risk and challenge like investing all your savings in one stock. It actually benefits a couple to be naive about such an investment. Innocence in love means that all possibilities for happiness are “still on the table.” They haven’t ruled out something because a past relationship taught them something about it they should never have learned. They haven’t been with other partners, sexually, learning a foreign tongue which a spouse doesn’t want to speak. They haven’t been assimilating ideas that seem important to others but may prove poisonous to their relationship. We are not talking about obvious subjects that might arise in a premarital counseling session, but a lifetime of discovering each other: a husband learning what a wife meant by love or romance. A wife discovering why a husband’s needs are—in fact—needs and not just selfish interests. Two people discovering one another without pre-concieved notions based on profiles in personal pain. No other voices—just these two—communicating, building a bridge.

In the *Odyssey* by Homer, Odysseus went off to fight a war in Troy and didn’t return for 10 years—years of dangerous adventures on the Sea. His wife, Penelope, waited, and waited, and waited for him, fighting off suitor after suitor remaining faithful to him even though she didn’t know whether or not he was still alive. Her joy was unsurpassed when she looked up and there he was! Some, no doubt, rationalized that there would be no benefit in denying herself love, but she wasn’t! She was waiting faithfully *on* love because she knew there was clearly a difference between the forbidden pleasures of many suitors and the return of her Odysseus. Deep within the psyche of all of us are places left vacant to welcome only that one special someone whom hope tells us is out there and on their way home.