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## **Understanding Differences**

Guest: Scott Kedersha  
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**Bob:** When we're dating, we're often attracted to differences, ways in which our boyfriend or girlfriend are different than we are. Scott Kedersha says that attraction doesn't last.

**Scott:** Eventually they're going to realize all of those things they thought were really cute at one point now become annoying. So they were spontaneous at one point; now they're irresponsible. Organized becomes retentive and difficult and unyielding and stubborn. So what are you going to do when—and you shouldn't be surprised by it, because you're going to be different from each other.

**Bob:** This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson, and I'm Bob Lepine.

Is there anything we can do as moms and dads or as pastors or just as friends to help couples who are thinking about getting married understand how their differences may eventually get on each other's nerves? We'll talk more about that today; stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us.

You have three married sons, right?

**Dave:** Yes we do.

**Bob:** Were you involved in their premarital preparation? Well, I guess you were; you're their parents, so of course you're involved in their pre—but did you do their classes?

**Dave:** We did one.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** We did one son's premarital—

**Ann:** —and the other son is like, "Are you insane? Why would you let Mom and Dad do your premarital counseling?" [Laughter] Which we were hurt by, but totally understood.

**Dave:** What do you think, honey, when you think back on it? Was it a good choice or not?

**Ann:** For them? Oh, I don't know...

**Dave:** I think it was a bad choice.

**Ann:** We had fun.

**Dave:** We loved it!

**Ann:** But we actually had somebody else do all the stuff on sex. That was wise, wasn't it?  
[Laughter]

**Bob:** Scott Kedersha's joining us again today; Scott, welcome back.

**Scott:** Thank you.

**Bob:** Scott is on staff at a church in Dallas, Watermark Church, where he leads the marriage ministry that's going on there. Six thousand, over the last decade, six, seven thousand engaged couples have gone through premarital with Scott and his team. So, do you have married kids?

**Scott:** I don't. I have young kids—they better not be married yet! [Laughter]

**Bob:** Will you do their premarital?

**Scott:** I don't think we will. I mean, I think we'll be involved in some way; I mean, I sure hope they would learn from Mom and Dad and we'd love to be as involved as they want us to be. We probably won't have the sex talk with them; we'll leave that to somebody else just so they don't vomit during the session. [Laughter]

**Ann:** That's a really good idea!

**Bob:** It's good, though, for our kids to hear biblical principles about marriage from somebody other than us, don't you think?

**Dave:** Oh, for sure, and I think that definitely did happen for our kids as well. I will say this. One of the privileges of my life was being the pastor at their wedding. To look at them in that tender ceremony in that moment. Wow, I can feel it right now. What's really interesting, when my oldest son was born I started a day per week fasting and I prayed for his and then the other two boys wife they would some day marry. Then there I am standing in our chapel and I look over—and she has no idea I've been praying for her before she was born—what a moment.

**Bob:** Scott, you've written a book called *Ready or Knot*, with k-n-o-t, tying the knot; *Ready or Knot*. This is for engaged couples to talk about—and maybe pre-engaged couples.

**Scott:** Yes.

**Bob:** You think this is for dating couples to start talking about these things?

**Scott:** Absolutely. Going back to your number you said before, about 6500 couples come through our premarital class. Probably about half of those are seriously dating couples. So that doesn't mean they're on date one or two of each other—

**Bob:** Right.

**Scott:** —it means they're thinking about putting a ring on the finger.

**Ann:** Are these potentially remarried couples too?

**Scott:** Yes. There are probably about ten, twenty per cent of them a year will come through as a second marriage, potentially for one or both of them. But a high majority of them—probably about 60 per cent—are actually in that seriously dating category as opposed to engaged.

**Dave:** I have to ask you this, because I bet you know the data. One of our dreams at our church is to lower the divorce rate.

**Scott:** Yes.

**Dave:** Have you seen that happen through this process?

**Scott:** So, we don't have any hard data on it, but we would say, everything we try to do, we try to do so much on the proactive side of getting them before they get engaged, before they get married, while they're newlyweds, so we're putting a lot of resource and time and leaders and community into helping them build it up from the beginning. So we don't have hard data.

Typically, honestly, what we're seeing is countless stories have come out of couples who leave each other and love Jesus, and we do think that of our small groups we do for newlyweds, probably one couple per group there's a divorce spared. That's just what we've hypothesized; we can't prove that. But we've certainly couples who love the Lord and love one another.

**Bob:** I'm going to take a quick poll here. We've already talked this week about the fact that the number one conversation that these couples need to be having is about faith and about where they are and whether Jesus is Lord of their lives.

If we were to identify the number one issue that these couples are going to be wrestling with when marriage starts—we'll assume the faith foundation's in place, they both love the Lord, but they have other issues. Pick your issue, and we'll see if we have agreement on this. Do you know what you think it is, the number one issue?

**Dave:** I'm going to let my wife go first [Laughter], because I know that would be an issue right there. [Laughter]

**Ann:** I'm thinking conflict, conflict/communication.

**Bob:** The ability to resolve conflict, the ability to communicate with one another.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Bob:** Okay. Is that where you were thinking?

**Dave:** Yes, I was thinking that, and I was also thinking—and it's your first chapter in the book, Scott, this belief that there's the "one," and that she or he will complete me, you know. That famous line from the Jerry McGuire movie, I think when couples get disappointed in their marriage—and every couple at some point will—they think, "I'm married to the wrong person."

Again, it comes back to what we said before; it comes back to their faith. I think that's a big deal for couples. They don't realize that's going to happen.

**Ann:** What would you say, Bob?

**Bob:** Well, I want to get Scott, I want to let him weigh in before—

**Dave:** Oh, look at you! You're bailing out!

**Ann:** Oh, yes, I know! Yes, yes! [Laughter]

**Bob:** Okay, I'll go.

**Ann:** Okay.

**Bob:** I would think it's the area that is the most uncomfortable one to have a conversation about, and the one that most couples have already had some experience in before they get married, and that's sexual intimacy, where they have early issues in this area, and they don't know where to go or how to talk to anybody about it, but it's part of the frustration that they're feeling.

So, we have three different answers. Do you have the right answer for us?

**Scott:** I'm going to give a fourth one.

**Bob:** Really!

**Ann:** Oh.

**Scott:** Yes. So, I think it's, honestly, dealing with the differences you have with each other. How do you deal with quirks and different personality? It plays into all three of those that you've said.

**Ann:** Oh, so we're all right and all wrong.

**Scott:** You're all right, yes. [Laughter]

Yes, it's a really good question, but I think it's, how do you deal with those differences, because you have to realize pretty quickly on in your relationship, "Okay, this person is radically different than me," so we're either going to push through those and work through them or we're going to end up breaking up the relationship.

**Bob:** Okay, so let's press into that one, the issue of differences. If you're coaching a premarital couple, what are the things you're going to tell them? Because what they're thinking about each other early on is, "It's amazing! We are so much alike! We like the same music. You like lasagna? I love lasagna," right? This is why they think they belong together.

**Scott:** Yes. On May 26, 2004 my wife gave birth to our twin sons. This is related. One is named Duncan, one is named Drew.

**Ann:** That's cute.

**Scott:** They're about 14 years old.

**Bob:** Glad the other's not Donut. [Laughter]

**Scott:** No, I wanted to name one Tim and the other Duncan after Tim Duncan—that's my personal favorite, but—

**Bob:** I like that!

**Scott:** Yes.

**Dave:** Oh no. Oh no, San Antonio Spurs. [Laughter]

**Bob:** Go for it.

**Scott:** So, conceived at the same moment, same sets of DNA working together to make them, grew in the same womb, born one minute apart, have grown up in the same home with a mom and dad who love the Lord and love them; and they could not be any more different than one another.

**Ann:** Really?

**Scott:** Yes. They look different, they act differently, different personality; one looks a little more like Kristyn, one looks a little more like me; one is more sporty, the other one is more intellectual; one is musical, the other one is highly social and just touchy-feely and very, very different, but amazing. We love them both and all of these incredible things we see in each of them. And they grew up in the same family, and they're so different from each other.

So a man meets a woman, they come from different DNA, different homes, different education, different values, different temperament, one's a male, one's a female; and they start dating and move towards marriage, and they wonder, "Why aren't we the same in every way?" Not to go against what you said, Bob, that they definitely do find all the things that are similar, "It's like we're made for each other."

**Bob:** Right.

**Scott:** But eventually they're going to realize all of those things they thought were really cute at one point now become annoying. So they were spontaneous at one point, now they're irresponsible. They were so organized, become just retentive and difficult and unyielding and stubborn. So what are you going to do when—and you shouldn't be surprised by it, because you're going to be different from each other.

**Bob:** Here's my hypothesis. We're attracted to the differences in part because I recognize that what's lacking in me is something that you bring that does fill in the gaps of my life. So, Maryanne's much more organized and self-disciplined than I am.

**Dave:** I hope so. [Laughter]

**Bob:** That was cold!

**Dave:** Just kidding! [Laughter]

**Bob:** She is, so I was attracted to somebody who had those qualities, because I think in part I was looking and going, "Those are things I'm not strong in, and I admire somebody who is."

But you're exactly right; once we're married and she's using these gifts of hers it's like, "This is so annoying." [Laughter] "Why does it always have to be this way? What's with all this discipline? Can't we just chill a little bit?" Right? That's where strengths that we see start to get lived out and maybe even overused, and they become weaknesses, and there's a clash.

This was a breakthrough for us. When Maryanne and I sat down and did one of these inventories that shows you differences, temperament differences. There are a dozen of them; today the big one's the enneagram.

**Dave:** Right.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Bob:** In our day it was the disk test that you were taking, right? Meyers—

**Dave:** Meyers-Briggs...

**Ann:** What were you on the disk?

**Bob:** We're not going to go into that. [Laughter]

**Dave:** Ann loves it!

**Bob:** I was just being a lion with her right there, that I'm ID; we're not going to do that now, Ann.

**Ann:** You're probably an ID. Go ahead.

**Bob:** So, when we found this out, here's where the breakthrough came. I started to go, "Oh, she's different," and then I realized, "She's not wrong, she's different. In fact, how she is, there are good things about how she is." I'd seen it as an irritation and "she should be more like me"; now I was like, "Oh, this is a good quality that is lacking for me. I admire and can benefit from this."

I used to think, "Why don't you act like me and think like me?" Now I was thinking, "I know why you don't; because you're not wired like me, and that's a benefit, not a liability."

**Scott:** Yes, that is one of the ways that God most grows us. The most sanctifying thing is that when we're married to somebody who's really different it helps us become more and more like Christ. First Peter 3:7, "Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way..." He goes on; the end of the verse says, "...so that your prayers may not be hindered."

So God uses those differences to help us become more and more like Christ and to help us become more dependent on Him. Very much like you, I'm so thankful—Kristyn is—I'm like the drama queen, is what I say, in our home; you know, just highly emotional, high highs, low lows. We need somebody in our home, when we're raising four boys, we need somebody who's levelheaded and can keep calm in the midst of the chaos.

Sometimes I get frustrated; I'm like, "Show some more emotion!" What I really need is better moments where I go, "I'm so thankful for the way that you're wired, because you make everything better the way that God made you."

**Bob:** The number one difference between the two of you? Is there one big, glaring thing that you would go, "Here's how we are most different"?

**Ann:** I'm waiting to see what Dave would say.

**Dave:** Oh, it doesn't matter what I say. [Laughter] No, I know what she's going to say. Watch this. Let's see if I'm right.

**Ann:** Okay, let's see.

**Dave:** She loved this about me when we were premarried, and then it became a huge frustration.

**Scott:** Is it your hairline? [Laughter]

**Dave:** Spoken by a fellow bald man, right?

**Bob:** You've gotten into the swing of this pretty good!

**Ann:** Yes!

**Bob:** This is like junior high all over again! [Laughter]

**Dave:** Yes, I would—I'm guessing Ann's going to say this: my laid-back-ness, my easygoing chill; and she's a driver, Type A, "Let's get it done. What are we doing today? What boxes are we going to check off today?" I'm like, "It's a day! Let's enjoy it!"

Is that it?

**Ann:** Yes, that's what I would say, too. We have a lot of similarities, and so we have a lot of the same weaknesses, which is frustrating. I used to love how laid-back Dave was, because I was driving hard and intense and he's spontaneous. Yes, that drove me crazy.

It's interesting, too, because when we were first married, I remember of seminary prof, who was actually the president, Don Weaver, asked me; he said, "What is your favorite quality about Dave?" I said, "I love that he's laid-back. I love that about him. It helps calm me down."

Then, later, I thought, "I can't stand this about him!" Especially after we had kids. "You need to step in here!" But now I would go back to saying, I love this about him. It really helps me.

**Dave:** We'll see how you talk about it in the book. I would love to hear your thought on that. Because I've watched Ann (and I hope I've done the same thing) go from first seeing the difference, enjoying it, then not liking it, and now celebrating it. She's gone all the way from embracing it (your words in the book) to celebrating it. I'm not going to ask Ann how that happened; I'm going to ask you, because you write about that. How do you get there?

**Scott:** One of the things I've just noticed—a friend of mine pointed this out—it's those things that used to drive us crazy just become so much less important down the road. What we tend to do is we focus on all the things that are frustrating about our spouse. You know, they're wired differently, their personality's different, they talk too much, they talk too little... Whatever

it might be, we just get stuck in those things, and eventually we realize those things are important, but they're not the main thing.

Instead, what I've had to learn to do—I learned this from Gary Thomas and his book *Cherish*—for one year, I took notice of everything that was different about my wife, put it in a journal, and for literally 365 days I kept track not of the wrongs, but of the rights. You know, just a paragraph every day on something about her that I love, that I value, that's different, that's unique.

At the end of that year, even a couple months in, all those little things that used to annoy me kind of fade away when you realize how incredible she is and what a gift she is.

So, you know, to go back to your question, you discover and understand what those differences are, you learn to celebrate them, realizing what a gift it is to be married to somebody who's not just like you; you embrace those differences and go, "I'm not going to make her me. She's not going to make me her. We're committed to one another; we have to learn to live with each other in an understanding way, and we celebrate those differences. We don't keep track of wrongs; we celebrate the good."

**Bob:** So, I'm going to go to what Dave identified, because I think there's a connection between our differences and the soulmate concept, where we think, "We fit together perfectly." Here I'm going back to the 1976 best picture of the year, *Rocky*.

**Scott:** Wow!

**Bob:** You remember in *Rocky* the scene where Polly is asking him, "What do you see in my sister, Adrian?" Right?

**Scott:** "Adrian!!"

**Bob:** And he says, profoundly, "She got gaps, I got gaps, and together we got no gaps," right?

**Dave:** That's pretty good!

**Ann:** Ooh, Bob, that's really good! [Laughter]

**Bob:** There was some profound theology in there. This idea of a soulmate is, "I have found somebody who gets me, somebody who meshes with me, somebody who fills the empty places in my life," and honestly, we're longing for that, right?

**Scott:** Right.

**Bob:** To have that in marriage—and some of that happens in marriage—to have that in marriage is a beautiful thing.

So, when you're sitting down with an engaged couple and you're talking to them and you say, "You know, the first time we met, it was clear that we were meant for each other, we're on the same page about so much, we have these things—" You don't want to burst their bubble, but what's the reality you want to inject into this whole soulmate way of thinking?

**Scott:** Over the years there's been a little bit of shift, where we no longer have to convince people marriage is hard. They see it so much around them. It's such a broken world we live in, so they either grew up in a broken home, they see it in social media, on TV, they see it in their friends, they see it maybe even in their own first marriage or first relationship. People know how difficult it is.

That being said, many premarried couples still come in with those rose-colored glasses on, and we need to lovingly point them to the fact that, "Your spouse is going to let you down. It is guaranteed." We try to make our spouse Jesus; we do think they have to complete us and fill in all the gaps.

We just go, "Hey, I want to lovingly tell you, you are going to be disappointed. You're going to let them down, they're going to let you down. If you can't handle that, then you're not fit to be married." That's why I start the book with this chapter on expectations. You have to expect that things are not going to work out the way you want them to, and if you can't deal with that, then please hit pause and don't get married.

If you're willing to deal with the fact that you're going to let one another down, then you have the opportunity to still pursue, to still show grace and to show mercy and forgiveness—everything that the gospel entails, everything that God shows us, we get the same opportunity to share with our spouse. If you can sign up for that, you're going to do well in marriage. If not, hit pause.

**Bob:** Scott, I think we do engaged couples a great service when we tell them ahead of time what's coming after they get married. So when we can say to them, "There's a day ahead for you when you're going to look at your spouse and go, 'I wonder if I married the wrong person,'" when they hear that and they just tuck it away, and in the moment they go, "I can't even imagine that ever happening," right?

Then seven months into the marriage when they look and go, "I think I married the wrong person," there's this little thing that goes off, "Wait! They said that was going to happen! So if they knew this was going to happen, maybe this isn't the end for us, the fact that we're right here and I'm not feeling it right now."

**Ann:** That this can be normal.

**Bob:** Yes!

**Ann:** I have a question. Sometimes I'm in a dilemma with premarrieds, because they will be struggling, saying, "This is really hard, this isn't happening," but they'll say, "But this is normal."

It's hard for me to know what is normal when should they get out, or saying, "It shouldn't be this hard at this point." How do you advise couples when they're going through that, "I just need to love him or I just need to respect him." How do you know when they should pull out rather than work through it?

**Scott:** It's finding that right tension between telling how hard marriage will be at times, but also talking about how great it is.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Scott:** Part of the reason why so many young couples are not getting married anymore is because all they hear about is married couples like the four of us, all we talk about is how difficult it is and how challenging it is. So we look around and we wonder, "Why are premarried couples choosing to move in together? Why are they choosing to not choose marriage and choose everything else?" "I want to go on the great trip to Europe, I want to drive the nice car, I want to get the pet; I want to do anything but get married."

We see them go from relationship to relationship to relationship, and we wonder, "Well, it's just these young millennials. They don't understand marriage, they don't understand commitment." There might be something going on there. I think the bigger problem is that we have not created and cast a compelling picture for what marriage is.

Telling them, "Yes, you're going to struggle. You're never going to be 100 per cent confident of this decision." It's impossible. No dating couple has ever moved forward with 100 per cent confidence. But if we cast this picture that, "Yes, it's going to let you down at times, but man, it is good and glorious and one of the greatest gifts around," I think we're going to see couples push through those things and not be so afraid moving forward into marriage.

**Bob:** Are you glad you're married?

**Ann:** So glad!

**Dave:** It's the greatest decision I've ever made, second to Christ, and it's the hardest, but it's awesome. It's worth it.

**Bob:** Are you glad you're married?

**Scott:** I echo everything Dave said.

**Bob:** I'd be a mess. I'd be a hot mess, a Dumpster fire, is what I like to say here—[Laughter]

**Ann:** I love the Dumpster fire analogy!

**Bob:** —if I was not married. So I want everybody who's listening to hear, we think marriage is awesome is great. But it's hard.

**Ann:** It's this beautiful dilemma. Because it's beautiful, but it's also difficult.

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