

Empowering Couples

As a Pastor, I am often asked to counsel couples during problems in their marriage. That was the case when Ray and Ashley asked for help. In the first meeting, I learned they had been married for three years and were beginning to get on each other's nerves. They seemed to fight about the same things over and over again. I asked them to recall what attracted them to each other. Ray stated that he was attracted to Ashley because she was very outgoing and she communicated well. Ashley loved Ray because he was caring and could go with the flow when problems came up. I then asked why they were fighting. Ray complained that Ashley was very outgoing and friendly with everyone, even other guys. Ashley was upset because Ray didn't seem to care about what they did as a couple; he always deferred to her wishes.

In my counseling ministry, I utilize *Engage Your Strengths* because I've concluded that when couples learn they have different, but complimentary, strengths they often realize that their conflicts may become collaborations and their relationships may be strengthened. I also like to introduce them to a new 'set of lenses' for approaching the Scriptures - that we are all "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalm 139:14, KJV) and that we find fulfillment in living the life God created us to live.

That was the case with Ray and Ashley. After taking the StrengthsFinder assessment, Ray saw that Ashley's Signature talents were Achiever, Woo, Learner, Belief, and Communication. He realized that her outgoing personality was connected to her strengths. He had no real reason to be concerned. Ashley saw that his strengths were Adaptability, Empathy, Relator, Consistency, and Connectedness. She realized that his willingness to go along with her ideas was a reflection of his ability to adapt and relate to her. She learned that Ray didn't really care what they did as long as they were together. Knowing each other's strengths helped them to navigate their future. Ashley asked for Ray's input and Ray was free to talk about what Ashley really wanted. They are still married.

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