When Humility Meets Humor
By Elizabeth Tomasek

When I look back to the first year of our marriage, I am humbled by the ways my husband, Mike, very gently, and always with humor, challenged me to expand my perceptions. He certainly could attest to my stubborn nature, often only seeing one ‘right’ way of accomplishing a task, and very early in our marriage, I learned that this viewpoint often came because I only knew of one way. Marriage changed that permanently. We have had countless opportunities to be reminded, “But the Lord gives grace to the humble,” (Prov 3:34). Certainly the grace that comes with humble acknowledgement (though maybe begrudgingly) of differing views has allowed us to grow closer to each other and to God.

Share the Light
The first time this became obvious was literally only minutes after we exchanged our vows. Ecstatic about our new status as husband and wife, my husband and I walked over to light the unity candle from our individual candles. Mike lifted his candle and was waiting for me. But my candle was stuck. I could not loosen it from its holder. Not yet panicking but aware a couple hundred pairs of eyes were on me, I glanced at Mike patiently waiting with his candle in hand. Without missing a beat, he whispered, “You could try lifting the whole candle up, in its holder.” So obvious! So simple! And yet I am not sure I would have thought of it in time, possibly ever. And so we lit our candle together, trying to hide our laughter.

Prevent an Explosion
A few months into married life, we excitedly welcomed my parents into our new home for the weekend. It was their first visit to us as out-of-state newlyweds, and we were excited. As a Saturday morning treat, we wanted to use our new smoothie maker. We gathered ingredients to double our usual batch, and Mike confidently added more and more to the blender. At one point, I gasped in disbelief, commenting on how all the extra fruit and yogurt, etc. could not possibly fit at once. I sensed my parents, knowing full well my stubbornness, watching what could be the beginning of a newlywed squabble, but they quietly sat at the table. Mike smiled good-naturedly and said comically, “Well, not with that attitude, it won’t.” And we all burst out laughing. Mike’s gift of humor diffused the tension altogether and redirected my thinking to accept new possibilities.

Sweat it Out...or Not
Shortly after this visit, Mike told me that he was not feeling great and thought he might be coming down with something. Wanting to offer any nurturing advice I might have, I shared with him what my mom had advised me, “You should sweat it out.”

He perked up, saying, “That’s what my mom always says, too!” We smiled at this, enjoying the discovery of something else our mothers had in common. Then he
began to bundle up in layer upon layer of clothing. Assuming he was taking extra measures to ensure a full sweat on his outdoor run, I prepared to wish him well. But instead, he climbed into bed where I was reading.

“What in the world are you doing?” I asked in astonishment.

“What do you mean?” he innocently asked, equally surprised. “I’m going to sweat it out while I sleep.” This made us both laugh uncontrollably, especially as we pictured each of our mothers giving us this advice.

Turns out there is more than one way to sweat it out, I guess. Who knew?

St. Paul writes to the Colossians, “You should put away the old self of your former way of life...and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on your new self, created in God’s way...” (Col 3:9-10). Without a doubt, marriage can call us to change our habits or behaviors for the good of our spouses. The intimacy and vulnerability of marriage also opened my eyes to my very thought process, including the ways that I often thought others were wrong because they did things differently than me, from organizing the groceries in the cabinet to driving home a different route from church. But marriage has challenged me to accept new ways of doing things, and Mike’s gentleness and humor has allowed me to embrace these differences at times. As we approach our ten-year anniversary, I am aware that I remain a work-in-progress, but I can now notice that I look for alternative solutions on my own, knowing that they must exist. Humility truly can bring about grace, but humor has been merciful, too.

I thank God daily for a spouse with diverse ideas to highlight the very uniqueness of God’s creation. Otherwise, I might still be on the altar, trying to get the candle out of the candle holder.

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