

AUDIENCE FAVORITE 40 YEARS

THE Grapefruit SYNDROME

By Lola B. Walters

As a young wife, I learned that the taste of marriage could be sweeter if I didn't focus on my husband's faults.

My husband and I had been married about two years—just long enough for me to realize that he was a normal man rather than a knight on a white charger—when I read a magazine article recommending that married couples schedule regular talks to discuss, truthfully and candidly, the habits or mannerisms they find annoying in each other. The theory was that if the partners knew of such annoyances, they could correct them before resentful feelings developed.

It made sense to me. I talked with my husband about the idea. After some hesitation, he agreed to give it a try.

As I recall, we were to name five things we found annoying, and I started off. After more than 50 years, I remember only my first complaint: grapefruit. I told him that I didn't like the way he ate grapefruit. He peeled it and ate it like an orange! Nobody else I knew ate grapefruit like that. Could a girl be expected to spend a lifetime, and even eternity, watching her husband eat grapefruit like an orange? Although I have forgotten them, I'm sure the rest of my complaints were similar.

After I finished, it was his turn to tell the things he disliked about me. Though it has been more than half a century, I still carry

a mental image of my husband's handsome young face as he gathered his brows together in a thoughtful, puzzled frown and then looked at me with his large blue-gray eyes and said, "Well, to tell the truth, I can't think of anything I don't like about you, Honey."

Gasp.

I quickly turned my back, because I didn't know how to explain the tears that had filled my eyes and were running down my face. I had found fault with him over such trivial things as the way he ate grapefruit, while he hadn't even noticed any of my peculiar, and no doubt annoying, ways.

I wish I could say that this experience completely cured me of fault finding. It didn't. But it did make me aware early in my marriage that husbands and wives need to keep in perspective, and usually ignore, the small differences in their habits and personalities. Whenever I hear of married couples being incompatible, I always wonder if they are suffering from what I now call the Grapefruit Syndrome. ■

"The Grapefruit Syndrome," originally published in April 1993, has consistently been an Ensign audience favorite. In celebration of our 40th anniversary, every month throughout the year we will be publishing more reader favorites online at ensign.lds.org. See also "My Favorite Ensign Article" on page 8 of this issue.

