

FOLLOWING CHRIST ALONE

Growing in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is a source of great joy, but it can be a source of conflict when your spouse doesn't share your commitment to Christ. It makes it more difficult to face life challenges, to make important decisions and even to grow in your faith when you are not both centering your life on God's will.

Even when your spouse is basically a good person, the disconnect of no shared faith in Christ or worrying about where your spouse will go after death can hurt your relationship. It's even worse if your spouse is hostile to your faith.

How can you honor God when your spouse doesn't? Is there anything you can do to help your spouse become a believer?

Spend time with Believers – But Not Too Much

Christianity is designed to be lived out among a community of believers. As a body of people following Christ, we give and receive fellowship, comfort, and encouragement (1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Galatians 6:2, Philipians 2:4, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4). You need to spend time with other believers.

But your spouse needs you as well. God designed marriage to be a source of mutual support. You are accountable to the vows you made to your husband or wife, even if he or she is not a believer. To honor both your marriage and your place in the body of Christ, you should commit to both regular church involvement and making quality time for your marriage.

There's a better chance your spouse will come to faith if you make time to go to church and he/she sees that God is a priority in your life and has changed you. If you join every Bible study and volunteer for a broad range of extra activities, it can give the signal that you are no longer committed to meeting the needs of your spouse – especially if you're doing those things to keep yourself occupied apart from your spouse.

Let Your Actions Be Your Witness

If you are balancing your involvement in a body of believers with your involvement in your marriage, what can you say to help your spouse become a believer? Not a whole lot. What really influences a spouse more than your words are your actions. To wives of unbelievers, the Apostle Peter said:

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.”
(1 Peter 3:1-2).

No amount of nagging or persuading will motivate an unbelieving spouse toward faith in Christ. In fact, it might even drive him/her further away. The best witness will be watching you live out your faith, walking in love and patience. It won't be easy and there's no guarantee that your spouse will choose to follow Christ. But, if you choose to love your spouse as unto the Lord, regardless of how he/she responds, you can leave the rest up to God, knowing He is faithful.

Maintain a Hopeful Perspective

When you are growing within a body of believers and faithfully seeking to serve and honor your spouse, you can be hopeful! You can't control the timing, but you can believe that God is able to use your commitment to win over even the most reluctant spouse. Pray for strength as you point your spouse to Christ and for his(her) heart to be softened and drawn to Him.

Don't give up and look for a way out

Paul, in Corinthians Paul clearly admonishes Christians who are married to non-Christians not to divorce: *"To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy."* (I Corinthians 7:12-14)

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GOING FURTHER RESOURCES

Beloved Unbeliever: Loving Your Husband into the Faith

by Jo Berry

Discover positive ways using the scriptural framework of love to approach being unequally yoked.

Learn how to be a suitable helper; deal with hurts, heartaches, and hindrances; shoulder spiritual responsibility; and see that happiness is possible in an unequally yoked situation.

Spiritual Mismatch: Hope for Christians Married to Someone Who Doesn't Know God

by Lee Strobel & Leslie Strobel

Reveals surprising insights into the thinking of non-Christian spouses. Gives steps toward making the most of your mismatched marriage, principles for reaching out to your partner with the gospel, and advice for raising your children in a spiritually mismatched home.
