

Married to an Unbelieving Spouse

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There are three areas in which we connect to our spouse: physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Growing in an intimate relationship with God can be a source of great joy but not being able to share this spiritual dimension within a marriage can be a source of great frustration. It makes marriage more difficult when facing life's challenges or making important decisions if you are alone in this spiritual dimension.

Even when your spouse is basically a good person, this disconnect in having a shared faith can hurt your relationship. In addition to this is the anxiety you face as you worry about their eternal destiny. Marital connectedness is even worse if your spouse is hostile to your faith. What are you to do when your spouse doesn't honor God or your faith? Is there anything you can do to help your spouse become a believer?

Be Connected at Church – But Be Careful

Authentic Christianity is lived out within a group of fellow believers. You must receive fellowship, teaching, comfort, and encouragement from a body of believers in order to maintain a growing relationship with Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Galatians 6:2, Philippians 2:4, Hebrews 10:24) You need a community of believers, especially others who are following God alone in their marriages like you are. But your spouse needs you as well. Be careful not to overload your calendar with church commitments at the expense of time with your spouse. They need to know and feel that they are a priority in your life. There is a better chance they will come to Christ if you are able to come to church as well as make time for them. This will allow them to see the changes Christ has made in your life.

But if you join every Bible study available and serve in any and every ministry, it can communicate to your spouse that you are no longer committed to meeting their needs. They may feel that you are doing all these things to be apart from them.

Show Them Your Faith

Actions speak louder than words...every time! Your walk must back up your talk. Peter addresses this issue when he said, "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without word by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and respectful attitudes of your lives." (1 Peter 3:1-2) To the husbands he says, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect...so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (1 Peter 3:7)

No amount of nagging, pressure, guilt trips, or persuasion will draw them to Christ. In fact, this could push them away from God. Instead, give your spouse the grace, love, and care that Christ gave to you. Show them, like never before, what God can do to someone's heart. All the while, pray for them. It won't be easy and there are no guarantees this will produce a changed heart, but if you choose to love them as unto the Lord, regardless of how they respond, you can leave the rest up to God, knowing you were faithful to His word.

Going Further – Resources

Recommended Books:

- *Beloved Unbeliever* by Jo Barry
- *Surviving a Spiritual Mismatch in Marriage* by Lee Strobel

Recommended Websites:

- <http://unequalmarriage.typepad.com> - a blog for those seeking practical help and encouragement to thrive in a spiritually unequal marriage