



I'M MARRIED TO AN UNBELIEVER

Growing in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is one of the greatest joys of the Christian life. However, it can also be a source of conflict when a spouse does not share one's commitment to Christ. Facing life's challenges, making significant decisions, and growing in faith can be more difficult when a couple is not both centered on God's will.

Even when a spouse is a good person, the absence of a shared faith in Christ, or concerns about a spouse's eternal destiny, can strain the relationship. It can cause tension due to fear of their eternal state or even frustration because of their reluctance to consider faith in Christ. This can be even more challenging if a spouse is hostile toward one's faith.

How can one honor God in this situation? Is there anything that can be done to help a spouse become a believer?

1. BE WITH BELIEVERS—BUT NOT TOO MUCH

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Christianity is a relational faith, meant to be lived out in community. As followers of Christ, we gain fellowship, comfort, and encouragement from other believers (Philippians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 1:3–4). This community is especially valuable for those walking the road of following Christ alone in their marriage.

However, a spouse also needs the other's attention and commitment. God designed marriage to be a source of mutual support (Genesis 2:24).

Even if a spouse is not a believer, one is still accountable to the vows made. It may be refreshing to be with God's people and even draining to be with the spouse one loves, but God will honor those who honor their vows. Remaining faithful to God in the relationship will reap eternal rewards. Set your mind there!

Couples should balance time between the church family and the spouse. Commit to regular church involvement but leave room for quality time to invest in the marriage. When a spouse sees how God has changed one's life, prioritizing Him without neglecting the marriage, it can be a powerful testimony of faith.

Avoid the trap of overcommitting to church activities as a way of distancing from a spouse or attempting to pressure them into faith by trying to "do enough" for them to give up and give in; this approach typically does not work. Instead, focus on modeling a life transformed by Christ, balancing involvement in church with commitment to the marriage. Genuine joy and peace in following Jesus are more likely to draw a spouse to Him than any amount of overactivity or coercion. As 1 Peter 3:15 reminds us, "Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with *gentleness* and *respect*" (emphasis added). Living out faith with humility and love will be a far more compelling witness than striving to force a response. Instead, model how Christ's love transforms every area of life, including the marriage.

2. LET YOUR ACTIONS BE YOUR WITNESS

"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).

While words have power, actions will often speak louder to an unbelieving spouse. No amount of nagging or persuading will draw a spouse to Christ. In fact, it could drive them further away.

Instead, let faith shine through actions. Show the spouse respect, kindness, and love beyond what they have ever experienced. Ephesians 5:33 calls a husband to "love his wife as himself" and a wife to "respect her husband." Living out these biblical principles demonstrates Christ's transformative love in practical, visible ways.

This approach requires patience and perseverance. Actions may not generate an immediate response, but by choosing to love and honor a spouse as unto the Lord, one leaves room for God to work in their heart.

3. MAINTAIN A HOPEFUL PERSPECTIVE

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" (Romans 12:12).

"For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

When one faithfully serves and esteems a spouse while staying connected to the body of believers, there is reason to hold onto hope. Remember, salvation is ultimately God's work.

Pray earnestly for a spouse. Lift them up to God, asking Him to soften their heart and draw them to Christ (2 Peter 3:9). Trust that He can use one's faithfulness to make an eternal impact.

Though the journey may be long and challenging, find comfort in knowing that your faithful witness and prayers are not in vain. As Philippians 1:6 reminds us, "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

4. TRUST GOD WITH THE RESULTS

"So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Ultimately, the responsibility is to love one's spouse as Christ loves and to reflect His character in one's actions. Trust God with the results. He alone has the power to change hearts and bring a spouse to faith.

In the meantime, lean into the relationship with Christ, remain part of a supportive church community, and pray continually for strength and wisdom. As one follows Christ alone, God will give the grace to persevere and to be a light in the marriage.

By following these biblical principles, one can honor God in the marriage while trusting Him to work in a spouse's life. Remember, God is faithful, and He will sustain those who remain faithful to Him.

GOING FUTHER: RESOURCES

Beloved Unbeliever: Loving Your Husband Into the Faith by Jo Berry

When He Doesn't Believe: Help and Encouragement for Wives
by Nancy Kennedy

The Power of a Praying Wife by Stormie Omartian

Winning Him Without Words: 10 Keys to Thriving in Your Spiritually Mismatched Marriage by Lynn Donovan and Dineen Miller

Sacred Influence: How God Uses Wives to Shape the Souls of Their Husbands by Gary Thomas

Prayers for an Unequally Yoked Marriage by Lee Strobel and Leslie Strobel

Devotions for the Unequally Yoked: Encouragement and Strength for the Journey by Carla Anne Coroy

The Power of Prayer to Change Your Marriage by Stormie Omartian



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