

God Give Us Christian Homes: Keeping the Faith in a Religiously Mixed Marriage

(This series of lessons was compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources and many teachers over a period of thirty years. The compiler is very grateful for their wisdom.)

Introduction:

- A. "Something has got to go, either my marriage or my faith. I can't stand the constant conflict. I feel so low all of the time: at home where I am put down for trying to do right, and at church because I am forced to be a loner."
 - 1. She said that four months before abandoning the Lord and His church.
- B. I am not going to preach on the merits of marrying a faithful Christian, nor on the burdens that come to those who do not.
 - 1. This lesson is for those who are already in a religiously mixed marriage.
 - 2. Your marriage vows to non-Christians are just as binding as if they were made to devout children of God. Your responsibilities to your mate are in no wise diminished because they are not Christians.
 - 3. Nor may you leave your marriage simply because your mate has yet to obey the gospel. There is only one scriptural cause for divorce, and a religiously mixed marriage is not scriptural grounds.
 - a. Matt. 19:9; 1Cor. 7:10-16
- C. Therefore, how can one avoid despair and discouragement, and prosper in the faith?
 - 1. First, maintain right relationship with God.
 - 2. Second, maintain right relationship with your mate.
 - 3. Third, look for means and opportunities to serve God alone.
 - 4. Fourth, live a faithful example that will provide you with opportunities to teach and save your mate.

I. MAINTAIN RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- A. Strengthen your resolve to remain with the Lord regardless...
 - 1. All of us need all the support and encouragement we can possibly receive to be able to attain the heavenly home. We certainly do not need someone consciously or unconsciously opposing our efforts.
 - a. Heb. 10:23-25, 3:12-14; 1Cor. 7:35
 - 2. The people who think they are especially strong and immune to this influence are the one who are most vulnerable to it
 - a. 1Cor. 15:33
 - b. What chosen relationship has greater influence upon our lives than that with our spouse?
 - 3. You are under eternal obligation to put God first; your obligation to your mate is limited to this life only.
 - a. Matt. 22:34-40; Luke 14:26
- B. Prepare yourself for the threat of being abandoned or divorced.
 - 1. Even though you may be perfectly innocent, you may be forced into a position that demands you to live alone and celibate for the remainder

of your life. A non-Christian lives by the world's standard for marriage, divorce, and remarriage, not God's.

a. Matt. 5:32; 1Cor. 7:10-11

2. Many have been destroyed by Satan because the desires of the flesh had such hold on them they would not live celibate to save their souls.

C. Determine that you will meet your Divine obligation of raising children in Christ

1. Marrying a non-Christian may provide you with little or no help with the proper upbringing of children. There is a big difference in bringing up children and bringing up children in the nurture of the Lord

a. Eph. 6:4; 2Tim. 1:5, 3:15

b. It is difficult enough to bring children up properly, when both parents are zealous in serving the Lord, but when one parent has little interest in the spiritual, it's extremely difficult.

2. Always set the right example, as you will be the only one doing it.

a. Titus 2:7-8

b. Your unbelieving mate may tragically be a bad example for your offspring - 1Cor. 15:33; 2Cor. 7:1

c. Your unbelieving mate may cause your children to be taught a false religion - Matt. 15:13-14

D. You must daily, fervently fight the temptation to compromise the faith in order to maintain peace with a non-Christian mate.

1. B Street Church of Christ, Miami, OK - 1957-77

Christian to Non Christian

76 marriages

57 left faith

25 divorces

19 faithful

Christian to Christian

64 marriages

5 left faith

2 divorces

59 faithful

2. Bridge Street Church of Christ, Wynne, AR - 1962-1981

Christian to Non Christian

76 marriages

61 left faith

23 divorces

15 faithful

Christian to Christian

28 marriages

4 left faith

4 divorces

24 faithful

II. MAINTAIN THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MATE

A. Communicate

1. Do not treat this difference between you as if it does not exist

a. Prov. 25:11, 18:21, 12:18, 15:23

2. Regardless of what is said or never said, the implication is there: "If you are part of the faith, we agree and are in fellowship and bound for the same eternal destination. If we are not part of the same faith, we do not agree and we do not share that which is most fundamental to our life view. The difference is there and will generate suspicion and jealousy if not addressed.

B. Listen

1. Do not do all of the talking; listening carefully to your mate will let them know you care, and may give you the clues you need to give the answer that moves them to obedience.
 - a. Prov. 18:2
 2. Do not be afraid of what you might hear - 1John 4:18
 3. Eph. 4:31-32 applies to your marriage, too.
- C. Maintain your God assigned role
1. Questions:
 - a. "Do I have to submit to him if he is not a Christian?"
 - b. "How far must submission go?"
 - c. "As a Christian man, do I have a right to require submission of my non-Christian wife?"
 2. Who is God's marriage law for?
 - a. God instituted marriage before the church, before the Law of Moses, before the patriarchs - Gen. 2:18-24, 3:16-19
 - b. His law in marriage is for Christian and non-Christian alike.
 - c. Non Christians will answer to God in judgment for not keeping it whether they thought themselves subject to it or not.
 3. So, what does God require of Christian men and women in their relationships with their non-Christian mates?
 - a. Eph. 5:21-33
 - b. Submission without sin - Acts 4:19
 - c. Leadership without dictatorship - 1Peter 3:7

III. LOOK FOR MEANS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE GOD ALONE

- A. How would you serve God if you were single? Widowed? How would you expect your unmarried children or widowed parents to serve God?
1. They would do so alone. They would assemble, sing, commune, give, pray, study, visit the sick, teach the gospel to others, live moral examples, work, love, help, worship alone
 2. And so must you. Remember, marrying an unbeliever was your choice. You must now choose to face the barriers that come with it.
 3. It is not more than you can handle - 1Cor. 10:13

VI. LIVE A FAITHFUL EXAMPLE THAT WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO TEACH AND SAVE YOUR MATE

- A. What are the difficulties faced by the non-Christian spouse who is married to a devout Christian?
1. Isolation
 - a. Left at home while the other goes to church
 - b. Taking the kids to church when I have things planned for them on the weekend
 - c. His Christian friends treat me like an outsider
 2. Feeling betrayed
 - a. I didn't know it was going to interfere with our lives this much
 - b. She is more dedicated to the church than to me

3. Fear
 - a. My spouse is moving forward or away from me
 - b. I am losing her
 4. Aversion
 - a. I do not believe in this silly waste of time
 - b. I do not want my children involved in this superstitious trivia
 - c. My money would be better spent on other charities
 5. Prejudice
 - a. My family was another denomination and I think my wife's church is a group of fanatics
 - b. My family/friends would think me foolish for going to that church
 6. Resentment
 - a. Her unspoken goodness shows disapproval of my life
 - b. Everything has to be his way
 - c. The time and money my mate gives to that church
- B. As a Christian mate, what are you going to do about this?
1. If you compromise, you both lose.
 2. If you ignore it, you both lose.
 3. If you give up, you both lose.
- C. The only chance you have for a successful marriage is to do what Peter said.
1. 1Peter 3:1-6

Conclusion:

In no way do I wish to discourage Christians who are already married to non-Christians. Interestingly, some very fine people are the unbelieving companions of Christians. And, some of the strongest Christians among us today were influenced to come to the Lord by Christian mates while they were still unbelievers.

Christians married to non-Christians can still share love, maintain godly duties, and produce lasting good from their union. But God's people must be certain not permit love for their mate, Christian or non-Christian, to cause them to drift away from God's will. It has happened, can happen, and will continue to happen if one does not learn from the principles in the Bible. Good people are led astray by love for unbelieving mates. The constant, gradual wear on some Christians is more than they can bear. They slowly come to compromise God's will on morality and doctrine to the point where they cease to resemble the godly, sincere Christians they once were.

If you are not married, permit me to encourage you to marry a faithful Christian. Keep in mind that not all professed Christians are faithful children of God (Matt. 7:21) so please use caution. If you cannot find a faithful Christian to marry, I encourage you to ask God for His help to patiently look for opportunities to find one. If you still decide to marry a non-Christian, may I encourage you to at least marry someone who will support you in your faith and who will remain true to you as a mate? Without this, you may be influenced to sin or error, or have your marriage end prematurely. Granted, this happens even among Christians, but the chances of it occurring are much greater in the religiously mixed marriage.

Above all, be patient in selecting a mate. Why rush into a relationship that will influence you more than any other for the rest of your life? Pray for understanding. Look

to the scriptures for wisdom. And be the kind of mate you want to marry. You cannot find a godly mate, or a mate who will support you in your choice to live godly, when you are not living in a way that attracts God-fearing people.