



Unbelieving Spouse

God wants a husband and wife to believe together in His salvation through Jesus Christ. And if you're a believer who is yoked in marriage with an unbelieving spouse, you know how futile it can seem as you go round in circles.

So what can I do?

That's good for people to know before they get married, you may say, but what if a believer has knowingly married a non-believer or they were married as non-believers and one spouse becomes a believer? Well, two things are certain. First, the unequal yoke does not in any way set aside the covenant of their marriage. Second, the believing spouse's attempt to forcibly bring the other around will never succeed.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

So if you're frustrated over your failed attempt to get your spouse to share the new life you've found, here is the word that will set you free, not from the yoke of marriage, but from useless struggle in it: All you have to do is to fulfill your biblical role in your marriage, and God will do the rest. Your responsibility toward your spouse remains just what it has always been: to love and cherish in every circumstance.

You can be at peace because you already have the Lord working for you. He is much more powerful than anything you could say to convert your husband or wife, working through your mystical union in one flesh that the Bible teaches. In other words, you can stop trying to change your spouse, which causes strife in your home, and start believing for a miracle instead. God is working to convert your spouse through you, but by your actions much more than by your words. In fact, God may prefer to do the work without your words.

Release Your Spouse to God

God has sent the Holy Spirit to change your spouse. You can't convert your spouse. No one else but the Holy Spirit can. It takes God Himself to convince people to believe. So release your spouse to God and allow the Holy Spirit to work. Your responsibility is to be a faithful witness, not just sharing the truth but living it. Let the life of Christ in you minister that love which will bring you and your spouse into that holy union that God has ordained for your marriage.

For wives, being a faithful witness means respecting your husband's role as the head of the family by being submissive to his authority. "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." (Ephesians 5:22-24)

For husbands, that means giving yourself to your wife in selfless devotion, remembering your oneness, like the relationship of Christ to His church: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her in this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church." (Ephesians 5:25,28,29)

Command Respect, Not Arguments

Just as your call is to respect your spouse's position and to love and cherish him or her, the children are also called to honor your spouse. It's very tempting to allow yourself to subtly convey to your children your disapproval of your unbelieving spouse and so undermine his or her authority over them. Help your children understand that they, too, are to be witnesses to the other parent by their respect and love.

Shun Self-Pity

One of the most subtle ways that Satan can wreck your faithful witness is to tempt you to harbor a grudge or to nurse feelings of self-pity. Brooding over your feelings of persecution can only rob you of the Holy Spirit's help. Confess and repent of any bitterness, resentment, or unforgiveness and receive God's cleansing. Then thank the Lord for His grace and forgiveness. Although you should not broadcast your disappointment over your spouse's unbelief, you should share your feelings and questions with a Christian counselor or minister whose wisdom in spiritual matters and family relations is respected.

Pulling Together

You can also give thanks to God for every little victory along the way. This exercise of prayer will foster in your spirit the hope you'll need for the longer haul. And keep up your hope. When your spouse does finally come to share your belief in Jesus Christ - what a triumph! Where the Holy Spirit is in control, there is great hope for the ideal relationship God has in mind between you, your spouse, and family.

Adapted from cbn.com



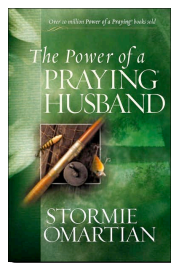
RELATED SCRIPTURE

"However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

"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 words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (1 Peter 3:1.2).



RELATED RESOURCES

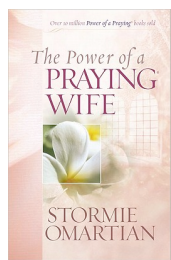


The Power of a Praying Husband

Stormie Omartian

ISBN 978-1602000605

In *The Power of a Praying Husband*, Stormie helps men pray effectively for their wives and marriages. By sharing stories and examples from her own marriage, Stormie encourages men to lovingly intercede for their wives in every area of their lives, including priorities, emotions, motherhood, fears, and sexuality.



The Power of a Praying Wife

Stormie Omartian

ISBN 978-0736919241

Bestselling author Stormie Omartian inspires women to develop a deeper relationship with their husbands by praying for them. This encouraging resource is packed with practical advice on praying for specific areas of a husband's life including his decision-making, fears, spiritual strength, role as father and leader, faith and future. Every woman who desires a closer relationship with her husband will appreciate the life illustrations, select Scripture verses, and the assurances of God's promises and power for their marriage.

Small Groups at Long Hollow

You can find ongoing support for every challenge in life in a small group. Visit www.longhollow.com/grow and then click the button to Launch Group Finder Now.