



How Do I Witness To My Unbelieving Spouse?

By Kurt von Schleicher

There's a Difference, Even Though the World says There Isn't One

There is a huge difference between being a churchgoer and being a true Christian; between being merely religious and being born anew!¹ God is forming ministry-minded marriages today for an eternal purpose—with ministry first going upwards and then outwards. And it is an enormous threat to hell when both partners in a marriage become regenerated and become spiritually mature.

Let's start with basic truth here. There is a difference between men and women. The Bible says, "***Male and female created He them***" (Gen. 1:27). God loves all gay people, but the Bible does not say that God created Adam and Steve. No, He created Adam and Eve. God calls homosexuality an abomination. He hates the sin. He hates everyone's sin. Those are not my words. My personal opinion is about as worthless as the next guys. *Abomination*, wow that's a big word! It's like if you lived in a land—on an Island lets say, where you were doing lots of seriously wrong and hurtful things and others started joining in—so bad in fact that it made God feel like bombing your nation. That's how I would describe the word *abomination*. My point is simple. In discussing this topic, we must start with God's original order. People are kind of like weak little puzzle pieces. If you force them together, it will only damage and mess up the beautiful puzzle picture.

It doesn't take a smart rocket scientist to realize that there's a difference between men and women and that a man called to be married is to marry one woman. Most of us recognize this. Yes, there are differences many of us fail to recognize between the sexes that are important to understand as a basis for what I want to talk about. There are basic differences that need to be recognized if there is ever to be a happy blending of the two.

When God first made man, the Lord recognized that man all by himself was simply not complete. Man all alone by himself can never be complete. God said, "***It is not good that the man should live alone***" (Gen. 2:18). Every man needs a

relationship with God most of all. But God created the woman so that through her the man might also find companionship, love—that which he could not get from the animal kingdom. Duh! You know how Adam dwelt among the animal kingdom, gave names to the animals and God didn't find among any animal proper help that was suitable for man. God also created the woman in order that she might be that completeness for man and compliment him. God wanted to (and still does want to) meet some needs through married people living together and ministering to each other. We are to look to God to meet all our needs not to our partner though.

God's idea of marriage is dealing with *a man and a woman* and it works right when both people are righteous in His Son—born again, spiritual and seeking Him together on God's terms. The Bible teaches that God's idea of marriage is **not** dealing with a man and a man, or an adult with a child or a woman with another woman, or a man with an animal, or a person with multiple partners, or a person with a person who had a sex change to become the opposite sex. No, check it out in His authoritative Word.

Maybe you were lost at the time when you married your unbelieving spouse. Maybe you were saved but simply disobedient to God's Word when you marred your lost spouse, but you've long since learned and asked God to forgive you for becoming unequally yoked. I'm not here to beat you up. I want to build you up! Paul said, ***"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"*** (2 Cor. 5:17). Whatever the case, it's time to walk tight with the Lord today and make the best of your situation for God's glory. The Bible says, ***"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit"*** (Rom. 8:1). God loves you, your spouse, their family and your family and He's pulling for you to have a successful marriage in His Son. When you gained a spouse, you also gained a family—your spouse did too. A real Christian will have a heart to respectfully minister to both sets of in-laws, a false saint won't. So don't cut off your in-laws and relatives who are all hoping for your collective best, even if they aren't perfect! You aren't either. Repent if you've hurt them and simply deal with the fundamental problem issues on

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. —Psalm 126:5-6

your end first. Deal with all that would hinder family relationship building—like wrong attitudes, wrong words, denial, ego or neglect. The Bible commands you to honor your parents so you will live long,² and one way to witness to your lost spouse is by proactively reaching out to both sets of in-laws.

In creating woman the Lord created her way different from man in physical structure (praise God a thousand times for this!)—the man being the stronger and often times larger person, the woman being the smaller and often times more frail person.

Along with physical differences, there are certain emotional differences that God created in them. Check out the emotional realm—God created the woman with a higher sensitivity than the man. Emotionally the man is usually more coarse, (and I don't mean in filthiness). His emotions will move in a narrower spectrum so to speak. A woman's emotional spectrum is much wider. She is capable of greater highs and also great lows. Yes, a man can also get excited and a man can get depressed. But, as a rule, he cannot seem to emotionally appreciate as much as a woman does. Men simply do not have the extreme emotional highs for the most part, that women can experience.

As far as intelligence is concerned, there simply isn't any difference at all between male or female as a general rule. Women are capable of having as great an understanding, insight, wisdom and ability in the thinking realm and processes as men are capable of having. It would appear that they may even have a slight advantage over men in the area that we call intuition. They both are valued equally, loved equally and are to be treated as equals. Spiritually, of course, men and women are one in the eyes of God (see Galatians 3:28).

Unfortunately, many women, because they are physically weaker for the most part, have been taken advantage of and hurt by men. And such pain could really become problematic for a married couple if the women does not receive healing before they are joined to their husband. Men potentially also could allow past hurts to hinder their marriage if they choose to, but Jesus is there for them the same yesterday, today and forever to heal them and give them success.

God having created us with different characteristics and a different emotional spectrum does set forth the rules of the relationship between the husband and the wife. And by obeying these rules in Jesus Christ, man and woman can find the fulfillment, joy, harmony, and great happiness from a life that God desires for them to enjoy.

Only Two Rules

God only has two rules for a successful *Christian marriage*: 1.) Love and, 2.) submit. The Bible says, ***“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church”*** (Eph. 5:22,25). That's pretty simple huh.

If your spouse asks you to do something that is clearly sinful—you know, if it's harmful to people—please don't do it! Your spouse might want company in their wrongdoing, but don't join them in it. Sure the Bible says that we are to submit to one another, but we are only to do this, *“as to the Lord.”* And that means that we humbly submit to each other short of sinning. Our highest loyalty must be to God's Word—that's Jesus, your first Love. The husband is the delegated authority in the home, but you are accountable to a higher Authority in heaven. That word submit should ruffle nobody's feathers, because all Christians are called to submit to God's direct Authority and to His delegated authorities every day. It's for the purpose of order. God is a God of order not chaos. The devil and his crowd are into rebellion and destruction, but we want God's faith, love and peace for the purpose of order.

Heaven will have faith, love and peace according to God's divine order, but there will be no witnessing to spouses or loved ones up there. It will be too late for that.

Are you a user, abuser or loser? Jesus died for you! Maybe you're hurting? Are you a *not-yet-saved-spouse* that is married to a lost mate? You can do something about you, if you can't for them. Come to Christ today! ***"In the day of my trouble I will call upon You [God], for You will answer me."***³ Are you a once lost spouse that is now a saved spouse that is still married to a lost mate, but you are wanting God to transform and fix your marriage? Don't seek to become unmarried. Don't seek another lover or spouse. You don't need a trade in model. Paul said, ***"It is good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife"*** (1Cor. 7:27).

You might say, but Kurt I don't yet have a Christian marriage as I desire. Then pray, submit to God's authority and love your spouse with Christ's love until you do have one, or at least until you are a mature Christian pleasing to God.

Some married people spend a lousy lifetime going to work on the horizontal plane, trying to fix the seemingly irreparable relationship with their spouse, but fail to see that if they would first get right on the vertical plane—with God through Christ, then all the horizontal relationships would fall into order (even if the lost spouse repeatedly resists the Holy Spirit and chooses never to get saved). Man's love is so small, but God's is huge. He's like a reservoir of pure love. In fact, though love is not God, God is love! He can pour love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit even for that person that is undeserving of love.

It's so sad when a husband and wife run out of love, or when they lose sight of the hopes and dreams of love that they once shared when they met. It's sad when the very presence of the other becomes a source of irritation, a reminder of past failures and painful disappointments.

Our wise God prompted Paul to write, ***"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"*** (2 Cor. 6:14 nkjv). We must teach the importance of this verse.

God gave us all fair warning in His Word, because He knows the loneliness, the pain and the lack of oneness that can come from being married to an unbeliever. If you're caught between your love for your Lord and your love for your spouse, how can you cope?

We need The Lord more than ever. When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he asked husbands and wives to turn their thoughts towards establishing a close relationship with the Son of God (5:22-33). In Jesus Christ alone we can find undying love and forgiveness for our failures. In Christ we find Someone who delights to forget the worst and loves to bring out the best. He reminds us not of what we've lost but of what we have yet to find.

Forgive us, Father, for focusing on each other's flaws and failures rather than on the love of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to rediscover anew our spouse in the light of Your great love for us. Help us to know your plan for us.

Helping Your Spouse See Jesus If They are Willing To

Some husbands and wives make it clear that they do not want the new Christian who is the spouse to attempt to convert them, no matter how subtly they may want to. Some feel that God is a mere crutch that they don't need.

Ladies, maybe you've already tried it all: tracts left on the coffee table; the Bible and Christian books left open by the bed; Scripture verses left stuck on to refrigerator door, or in briefcases, and in lunch sacks. Maybe you've pleaded, argued, kicked, and introduced them to some godly friends ...or even tried hard to have that **"gentle and quiet spirit"** that Peter admonished believing wives to develop (1 Pet. 3:4).

No one can make their husband or wife accept Christ. God will honor their choice and yours. Ephesians 2:8–9 states, **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."** When your spouse comes into a relationship with God, it will be by God's grace and not the result of anyone's works.

We've accepted the truth of 1 Corinthians 2:14 that says, **"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."** God alone, by His Spirit, convicts sinners (Jn. 6:44, 63; Jn. 16:8–11).

What Can We Do?

We can share our faith by living it first, not perfectly of course, but as honestly and graciously as we are able to. God will give you the power to live it if you will call out to Him. We can be doers of God's Word, rather than just hearers.

We can be real with our partners, to share who we are. I know of some unbelieving spouses who don't mind reading Scriptures with their saved spouses. They view it as the good American thing to do.

In the meantime, conflicts may inevitably arise.

When Two Worlds Collide

How can you work through such conflicts with your wife or husband? Here are some principles that may help you.

Look for some creative alternatives to offer your spouse. Sometimes when our desires conflict with those of our spouse, it's often possible, with God's help, to find a third alternative. Jesus exemplified this in Matthew 22. You remember how the wily

old religious Pharisees tried to entrap Jesus by asking Him whether it was lawful to pay tax to Caesar. But Jesus didn't reply to them with a yes-or-no answer. Instead, Christ simply asked them whose picture appeared on the coin. After they answered Jesus' question, He replied to them with, **"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"** (Matt. 22:21).

Try to avoid defining your marital problems and solutions in such a way that one spouse wins and the other one loses. Seek a win-win solution rather than a win-lose situation. Make the best of your situation. Ask God for wisdom and for another alternative that will work well for both of you. For instance, if your mate wants you to participate in an outside activity on Sunday, perhaps you could still visit church on Saturday night or at another time that week.

If you've expressed your concern, offered alternatives, and you're still at an marital impasse, ask God to guide you in prayer (and possible fasting) so that He will speak to your spouse. God spoke to Paul when he was an unbeliever and got His attention. Why would He not speak to your spouse as well? He loves us all the same.

If our Christian walk is without relational conflicts, then we might just be walking in concert with the lost world and having zero impact upon it. Why else would you not be touching irreligious people with the Gospel that is basically an offense to those who are perishing? Try opposing the enemy by full commitment to Jesus!

If what your partner asks you to do is clearly against God's will (as revealed in His Word), obey God, rather than people (see Acts 5:29), but retain a submissive spirit and a good attitude towards your spouse and all authority. It might also be a good time to seek the counsel of some wise, mature Christians regarding exactly how to pull that off. Fully count the cost. Thoroughly think through the possible consequences of your stance first, and bravely prepare for those potential consequences (see Luke 14:28–33). Ask God to make you willing to stand alone in your convictions that He gave you. There are some compromises in marriage that are wise and not sinful, but never compromise spiritually by sinning as you try to find the right solution. The Bible is very clear regarding many issues that you are not to take part in.

The Bible says, **"And you know that He [Jesus] was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin"** (1 Jn. 3:5).

Strive to be a peacemaker. Peter exhorted believers to **"live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble"** (1 Peter 3:8). We must guard against spiritual superiority or smugness. Rather, we do well to remember that no one is righteous (see Romans 3:10). We want to imitate the servant attitude that Paul described (in Phil. 2:5–7).

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.

When we relate to our spouses (and others) in humility, they may become more open to the things of God. If you're working through some challenging relational issues with them, remember what Proverbs 15:1 says: **"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."** Also be very careful with the tone of your responses, with your facial expressions, and hand gesticulations. Why allow your body language to come off angry? When you need to confront—a difficult but sometimes necessary responsibility—choose a time and location where your spouse is likely to listen rather than feel embarrassed or dishonored. Maybe take a casual walk together, or go out for a cup of coffee where you can be alone. Then prayerfully express your concerns gently and honestly showing respect. Try not to cut them off or talk over what they are saying.

Discuss your ministry commitments with your spouse. If you feel that God leading you to take on some time-consuming responsibility at your church, talk it over with your spouses first. If you have an understanding and make it very clear that even though you want to accept a particular responsibility, you will indeed find a replacement person if it really starts to conflict with your spouse and family time.

When a commitment is OK with your spouses, move ahead with it. Some lost spouses feel angry that the church has stolen their "saved spouse" away from them and they never get any time with them anymore.

If your unbelieving spouse doesn't approve, you must seek God's guidance. God indeed wants you to have some Bible based fellowship with growing Christians. God may show you another, more acceptable way to serve Him though. He may impress strongly upon your heart and mind that the proposed area of service is His will for you and then encourage you to take a stand. Or God may convict you that you have been negligent and need to relinquish your desire for this particular ministry opportunity, for your marriage's sake—for the sake of His great Cause!

Forgive your spouse! In Matthew (6:14), Jesus says, **"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."** Don't dwell on their past offenses. Forgiveness is not optional for Christians, but I do not mean to say that you must continue to take physical abuse from your spouse or keep your family in danger. What I do mean is that bitterness and vengeance have no place in your marriage. All your praying needs to be completely God centered and unhindered.

Is true Contentment even Possible?

Though it might seem impossible at times, you can experience contentment—even if you're married to an unbeliever. Contentment and peace might not fall down in a splash from above. Peace is a gift and contentment is learned. Paul wrote, **"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances"** (Phil. 4:11).

And contentment is different from the world's definition of happiness. To be content is to be at rest inside. The world's happiness, however, depends on our outward circumstances. Contentment depends on Christ on the throne within us. When we

draw on Christ's supernatural strength, the difficulties and trials of our lives need never defeat us.

Here's Some Ways that we Can Cultivate a Contented Heart:

1.) Honest and earnest praying to God about what troubles you will help you in this area! Paul urges us, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:6–7).

Peace that passes understanding comes to us when we trust our needs, fears, and all our desires to the Lord. He is the Prince of peace. Moreover, persistent intercessory prayer for others is the one thing that we can do for our spouses and friends. In prayer, we begin to see glimmers of God's perspective as we release our selfish agendas and timetables of trivial pursuits. Intercession basically aligns our will with God's will.

2.) Trusting. God has told us that He doesn't want anyone to perish but wants all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). As much as we yearn for our mates' salvation, God wants it even more. John 3:16 reminds us that He loved the world so much—and that includes our husbands or wives—that He sent His Son to die for them. Even though we may not see it, we can be sure God is working continually to draw them to Himself. We can trust Him to know precisely how to reach our spouses.

3.) Rejoicing. *"Rejoice always,"* is what Paul told the Thessalonians to do (in 1 Thess. 5:16 nasb). When we focus on who God is and all He has done for us, we can rejoice in the security that comes from being His beloved children. We can rest in the knowledge that God is working for our good, molding us into the image of His Son, drawing us deeper into Him (see Romans 8:28).

We wait expectantly on God's work in our spouses' lives, not with anxious foot-tapping, finger-twirling or drumming urgency but patiently, trusting our kind God, whose plans for us—and our spouses—are *"to prosper us and not to harm us ...to give us hope and a future"* (Jer. 29:11).

Non-sharing Is the Reason for the Dead Sea's Deadness

Do you remember hearing about that old Dead Sea Principle of evangelism? We Christians are not to be like the Dead Sea, always taking in but never giving our faith out. The non-giving is why the Dead Sea is dead. Christians are to import, import, import with the truth and the Holy Spirit's empowering just to grow real strong in Jesus and then we'll have an overflow of life to export for the sake of others who are in need of life. You know that the beautiful thing about ministering the Word to others is that the one who would do this must first take in so much more than they give out. Teaching, ministering, witnessing is a great way to grow and learn the Bible better.

The apostle Paul said, ***“The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things”*** (2Ti 2:6-7 nkjv). But some spouses are like the Dead Sea and they never seem to come alive no matter how much you pour into them or reason with them. With the Dead Sea’s salinity levels resting somewhere between 30 and 35%, there are simply no living fish, or other sea/lake life existing in there. Very little bacteria can even survive. In other words, there’s no life in the Dead Sea.

How did it get that way? I don’t know, but fresh water does flow into this sea. There’s just no outlet. Fresh water is changed to a stagnant saline solution as it’s stored in this body of water.

I tended my spiritual intake in pretty much the same way, allowing a river of fresh water from God to pour into me. I know that might sound so sweet or hyper-spiritual. But I was living in a Christian subculture and we have been fairly diligent concerning personal devotions, prayer meetings, church and Bible study attendance, leadership conferences (not that I personally have ever been some great leader), but we were determined to grow in Christ. We and rarely missed a special speaker, event or some great retreat. My car radio was tuned to four Christian stations and my close friends were all growing believers.

Maybe you have lived kind of like that with all your friends being real on-fire saints... except one—your spouse?

The water flowed in and the salt only seemed to thicken.

Some days, when in a rush of spiritual excitement over what God is teaching you or doing in your life, you find yourself verbally witnessing to your unbelieving wife or husband. Maybe you are feeling prayed-up, “anointed,” read full—flush with profound training from some new conference or book and you find it so hard to hold it all in so you share it, but only to find zero interest in what you are saying. Yet, God has called you to keep loving, keep on praying, and keep on living the life and not give up on that spouse that has just about given up on you now that you have a new first love in Jesus.

You’ve hashed it over with your Christian friends. You’ve practiced all your lines. It seems like you’ve played I’ll-say-they’ll-say a hundred times in preparation for the perfect witnessing time. Man, it’s so frustrating and sometimes it seems utterly hopeless. You’ve memorized the right verses and read all the apologetic articles to be read on the subject. You’ve promised God You’d bring up the subject when you felt that He was prompting you. You’ve promised God that you wouldn’t bring up the subject or anything regarding Jesus Christ for a period. You’ve tried it all and the pain, and ache and the barbs and mocking only seem to linger with your dark clouds of discouragement.

I just want to encourage you to forgive and press on. And just like David did, I challenge you to encourage yourself in the Lord as well. God had to put up with a wayward spouse too (Israel), so He fully understands what it’s like. If you think about it were all away from Him and in sin for a time. I don’t fully understand what

it's like because my spouse is a Christian, but I've counseled several spouses that are unequally yoked spiritually. I have also run into a wall before as I repeatedly tried to reach other loved ones ...over and over again, to no apparent avail. I don't know if seeds were even planted or watered, but there seems to be no yield of fruit, no harvest. Yes, I did all this with others. I've even tried being pushy, controlling, gripe-y, and manipulative in the Name of Jesus before, just because I wanted so badly for my loved one to turn, repent and be born again.

In the end, after you gave it your all to see that person freed from their (out in the open) destructive habits of sin, did you hear something semi-flippant but courteous from your spouse (or not at all courteous) about how they already figured out their own way to God, they didn't need any organized religion and they just seemed to stick with that lameness.

By my own fishing standards, I'd failed a lot in fishing for souls. My often unnatural outreach efforts have been too stiff, too direct (like full attack-mode with the Bible), and way too formulaic at times, but I did talk about my relationship with Jesus with vigor. It isn't about the four spiritual laws or the Roman's road or even about debating points of doctrine. The Word of God had been poured in to my life for many years, I was a self-feeder at home too, but it was now time to just bless others with more grace, listening, love and compassion—that same compassion that I had received.

There are times to step back, to pray and to simply let God work in the situation without getting in His way. The ultimate responsibility for the results of this fishing venture rest upon the Lord's shoulders after all. Salvation is of the Lord alone, but He doesn't save sinners alone. Therefore we are to obey Him moment by moment, but not pressure people or play Holy Spirit.

And something interesting has happened to me through the Dead Sea adventures with certain lost friends and loved ones. I got changed. Did you know that you don't need to really swim in the Dead Sea? The salt level is so high you float on top.

God can make your witnessing with your Dead Sea so to speak, easy... where you just enjoy the Lord's presence, promptings, power and peace and simply live above the circumstances of life. Jesus said, ***"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"*** (Matt. 11:28-30 nkjv).

***For with God
nothing will be
impossible.
Luke 1:37***

I gladly take your yoke of Lordship upon my shoulders, Jesus! Help me walk in the spirit of love and in high victory so as not to become a hypocrite. Empower me to be your witness, not allowing the devil through the words of others, to draw me into responding in the flesh where the enemy could eat

my lunch and defile my testimony. I want to be a humble, non-wimpy servant—a blessing to all those who are open to receiving and to those who are closed to receive from You. Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works...⁴ Make me faithful and give more fresh water so that I won't dry or die. And continue to give the good stuff and truth away through me to all those who are willing. I want to be a supernatural peace maker. Help me with my timing, tact, timbre, tone and attitude. Please make my beloved spouse desirous of the truth and then for giving it away. Raise the dead. Love though me with a pure and giving kind of love. Take away their blinders, grant true repentance and save them so we all can have fellowship and be together in our eternal home. In Jesus Name!

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

—1 Peter 3:15

Witnessing to a lost spouse has a lot to do with tenacious, determined persistence. It calls for abiding, perseverance.

We can learn a lot from our agrarian forefathers who would do their part, but also wait on the Lord. Farmers know that the harvest typically doesn't grow out of the ground to fruition over night. Paul said, ***"...Have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"*** (Eph. 4:28-30 niv).

One translation says it this way: ***"Give generously to others in need. Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them."***⁵

God has given you His promise, that He hears and answers prayer; He will heed your supplication if you cast on Him your care.

—Bernstecher

Witnessing has to do with consistency in controlling your attitude and tongue. James said that if you can control that, you can control your whole being.

If you have done well in these areas, then don't fret or give up. You must be patient in hope, dear one. The real fight is in the unseen realm. We are in a war and your family is worth fighting for, but your spouse is not the enemy. Paul taught us this saying, ***"For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and***

blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12 nlt). Be a praying witness. Yes, God hears every prayer a Christian prays! He answers every prayer a real Christian prays with either a "yes", "no", or with a "wait." But if your spouse is still living, God will not say no to your prayer for their salvation. Your spouse might say not to Him, but God won't say not to your spouse. He really cares for your spouse and family. Not one honest prayer is lost to God's ears. **"All my desire is before You,"** David penned in the midst of a deep personal trial of faith, **"and my sighing is not hidden from You"** (Ps. 38:9). David understood that we can cast all our cares on the Lord, even if no one else prays for us. He confidently concluded, **"In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me"** (86:7).

Christians Drawing Closer Together

You might feel like both your spouse and marriage are dead, but Jesus Christ is ALIVE! He said, **"I am the One who Lives; I was dead, but look, I am alive forever and ever!"** (Rev. 1:18). And because of this, He alone is able to meet every need that you have for all eternity! Some forty years ago, at the height of the Cold War, Winston Churchill asked Billy Graham if he really believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"With all my heart," Graham responded.

"Good," Churchill retorted. *"Then there is hope for the world."*

Yes way, there is hope for your marriage and there is hope for your world. Christ is our living hope, all because we serve a living Savior. **"In God's great mercy he has caused us to be born again into a living hope, because Jesus Christ rose from the dead."** (1 Pet. 1:3).

Never forget that this hope extends to your lost spouse and to your family!

Do you really expect to see God answer your prayers? See your spouse through Christ's eyes and then gently and respectfully encourage them with God's Word. A spouse will often become what the most important human in their life, thinks they will actually become. I'm not talking about some mystical power of visualization; I'm talking about putting your faith in God and trusting Him to intervene.

A loved spouse will often become what that most important human in their life... thinks they can nobly become. Pray and be that loving human to them!

Now that we've looked at the married relationship a bit, may God help us—for, as we each realize that God owns us and want to minister through us, that we each respectively have an obligation to the Lord as His servants—we can then choose the way of balance and fulfill our obligations upward and outward in spite of the incumbent pressures that might come along with them. Paul asked, **"Who is sufficient for these things?"** (2 Cor. 2:16). But along with Paul, I thank God that

our sufficiency is not of ourselves. Our sufficiency is of Christ. We learn to turn to Him for His aid, His guidance, and His strength in all these things.

It's been said that marriage is a 50-50 proposition, but I don't believe that. I believe marriage is a 100-100 proposition. If you only invest 50 percent to it, I don't think you will make it. Both sides need to be one hundred percent committed to Christ and then to each other as unto the Lord. We each need to give 100 percent in order to have a really happy, successful marriage. God's divine order calls for the husband be the head of the house in love and the wife to be submitted to the husband as is fit in the Lord ...without sinful compromise coming from either.

Under the Christian ethic God declares, **"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them"** (Col. 3:19). In the Greek or Roman ethic a husband didn't need to love his wife. In fact, according to Greek philosophers, every man was supposed to obtain a mistress or a concubine for his sexual pleasure and a wife merely to bear his legitimate children. But the Christian ethic says no to that type of behavior and, **"Husbands, love your wives."** This word for "love" is the word agape, which is a giving, self-sacrificing love.

Agape is the love that God has and expresses towards us—He so loved the world that He gave (Jn. 3:16). This is the kind of love that a husband is to have for his wife. In Ephesians Paul made it a little stronger: **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"** (Eph. 5:25). When God gave this command to the husbands, He knew all about the emotional needs of a woman. One of her greatest needs is the security from the knowledge that she is loved supremely by her husband. That she is number one on the human level and that he has no eyes or desires for any other woman.

There is something about her nature that requires constant affirming of these facts both verbally and by actions. If the wife feels no security in the relationship that is very problematic, for security comes with love. And because she lacks a sense of security, she will think, *"How can I submit to this jerk? I don't even know for sure if he's even concerned about my wellbeing. He just thinks of himself."*

If men can reverse this process to make them feel secure, it will draw the man and the wife closer and closer together. The more a husband shows and demonstrates his love to his wife, the more secure she feels and becomes. And the more secure she feels in his love for her, the more readily she will desire to submit under his authority and accept his decisions. And the more she submits, the more he will feel free to show his love to her again. So men, you need to start and get this process working right.

Ideally, the problem should be faced with both Christians in prayer, on their knees together, confessing all sins before the Lord for their failures to obey His Word.

Healthy Homework:

1. Allow the Holy Spirit to witness to your spouse's conscience. Don't try to reform them or get them to give up that destructive vice that you hate. Recognize that there is a larger core problem that needs to be addressed first. Why deal with the fruit, before God deals with the root? They need Jesus living as Lord on the inside. If your spouse is still open to discussing spiritual matters with you, consider yourself a blessed person. If they don't mind casually talking about what the Bible teaches, then have a casual dialog over (reading aloud) the Ten Commandments and how they relate to people today. Don't you try to convict, but as you prayerfully chat with your loved one, quoting some key evangelistic Scriptures in a non-preaching way, God promises us that His Word will not return void. Trust that seeds will be planted and watered.
2. Meditate upon Romans 12:3. If you're married to an unbeliever, how might you be tempted to *"think of yourself more highly than you ought"*?
3. Prayerfully meditate upon Romans 12:9–21. Now brainstorm in the Spirit over the five ways you can creatively demonstrate sincere devotion to your beloved spouse this week.
4. Which verses from this Bible passage would you most like to put into practice in your marriage? Ask God to equip and help you to identify three specific ways to wisely apply these instructions to your relationship with your mate.
5. Try inviting your spouse into your personal devotional prayer and Bible time daily or maybe weekly—you know whatever they can handle. Be sensitive rather than overbearing. Please don't sound over eager, like this is your pulpit to moralize and pontificate from. Let it be for the purpose of you praying over their concerns and needs and when the time is right, invite them to take a turn in talking to God. Sometimes it's easier to repent and start a prayer life to God through Christ, if an unbeliever first hears a Christian talk to God in a simple, fairly short and sincere way. And when they see God act, what a surprise it is!
6. See if your spouse will visit a cool Bible study group (not a Christian gripe and depression session) where other strong couples that she can relate to will be. Invite your spouse to a Christian concert or Christian movie (away from the church campus) where you know the Gospel will be clearly presented by a gifted non-religious, non-greedy evangelist.

Lord I want to know you right now. God, forgive me and come into my life. I repent in the best way that I know how and receive You by faith into my heart. Help us show each other the kind of love you have showed us. God, help us not to argue, not to speak up when we think the other one is doing

something that's stupid, but to keep our mouths shut and to go along with Your great plan—knowing that, even if we lose everything, we've still got each other and this love you give us. You are all we need, Lord. Make us into the kind of people and kind of couple you want us to be—good witnesses for you. Help us both live in submission to your authority. In Jesus Name, amen.

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¹ If this lingo sounds strange to you, please visit John 3 in the Bible and also: www.fish4souls.org/How2KnowHim

² Have you always done what God said to do? God said, **"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you"** (Exd. 20:12).

³ See Psalm 86:7. Call out to the Christ of the Bible in repentance and faith and He will be your eternal Solution.

⁴ See Psalm 141:1-4 NKJV

⁵ See the New Living Translation.