

Angie's Marriage Column – January 23, 2008

Should I Divorce My Unbelieving Husband?

Marriage Question: I am saved and married to an unsaved husband who isn't even trying to walk with the Lord...it's very frustrating...he makes horrible decisions that affect me and our children...decisions that he could get into legal trouble...I'm trying to stay positive about being married to him but honestly feeling that it's not going to get any better...only worse...what can I do? How can I still love God and deal with an unsaved husband who just won't do right? Should I divorce him? I know that God hates divorce but how do I stay married to a man who's lifestyle contradicts mine...he curses, gambles, and so many other things that are not godly but he's also loving, caring and unselfish.

Guidance: God's ideal for marriage is for couples to stay together – even if one spouse is an unbeliever. Your first priority as a believer is to love God and do His will...then you will be able to appreciate your husband in a more loving way.

God's will is for you to do nothing but be a loving and respectful wife. The more we go by our own understanding and try to change others and control outcomes, the more they will rebel against us. God has put you just where He wants you to be. God has a purpose for marriage situations such as this. Understand that "YOU" are the center of that purpose.

I know what you are thinking. You think it sounds contradictory to treat an unbeliever with kindness and love. But in actuality it is the BEST way to bring the unbeliever to accept Christ for their life. You win people to Christ by being LOVE and behaving in LOVING ways. Period!

You can't be self-righteous either, it will not work. Just because you go to church does not mean you are better than your husband. Pushing Christ down someone's throat will NEVER get them to see they NEED God. Keep reading...

The best thing you can do is UNDERSTAND what your role is as being (the) believer in the marriage. God wishes the believing spouse to be a loving example to try and win the unbeliever to Christ.

The fact that your husband is unsaved is not something you can control—your only responsibility is to be as supportive and loving to your husband as you possibly can. That is God’s will for your life as a believer.

Since you are (supposedly) saved already, then what I think God wants you to do is continuing BEING who you are and do your part in the marriage. Nothing else. Be loving.

I really hate using the word “saved” as if a person can just get saved overnight. The word “saved” is almost always used improperly and out of context. Who knows if they are (really) saved from death???

- What I mean to say is...Since you already follow Jesus Christ with your actions and have the Spirit of Christ within you then what I think God wants you to do is continue being who you are and do your part in the marriage.
- Pray about this and give the situation to God. When you stop trying to control situations and circumstances, you will see more clearly as what your role truly is.
- Do you see how your negative feelings are bringing you down and frustrating you so? Well, that is not the way to win someone over to Christ. You must let them decide to accept Christ for their life by letting them see “the light” shining in your life.
- God wants the believing spouse to be a positive influence on the unbelieving spouse. You can be that positive influence by letting go of the need to control “what your husband does” and “how he behaves”.
- Believers have a responsibility to the marriage if they are truly living for Christ, as they claim to be. Your example should make it easier for your spouse to believe in and accept Christ. If your example makes the unbelieving spouse confused and misled, they will not see Jesus in you. Sometimes you might not feel well enough spiritually or emotionally to be a good example for your spouse, and this is why you need to always stay focused on Christ for your own strength and comfort. Then you can use that strength to help the unbelieving spouse find their way to God.

Wherefore lift up thy hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;
And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out
of the way; but let it rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:12 KJV)

Should you divorce your husband? No, you should not divorce your husband. The last sentence in your email you told me that your husband is “unselfish, caring, and loving”. Well, you must allow those positive character traits outweigh the negative you see in your husband. You don’t have to accept his gambling, only tolerate it because he is your husband. Can you tell your husband not to gamble anymore? Is that going to lead your husband to Christ? I doubt it. You do not have to accept the cursing only tolerate it because you are his wife and you are married to him. Do you see the difference? You do not have to curse and you do not have to do anything that would go against the will of God. That right there is helping your husband make his way to God.

And of course it is perfectly ok to express yourself in a respectful manner about certain things that your husband does, such as gamble and cursing, but can you tell him to stop something that in his eyes is justified? Simple answer, no!

If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. **And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.** For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy. (1 Corinthians 7:12-15 KJV)

God regards a marriage to be sanctified even if there is only one believing spouse. That means that God has blessed your marriage and hopes it will help (your husband) the unbelieving spouse to receive salvation. Also any children in the home are also blessed because of a believing spouse, until they are old enough to make decisions and decide for themselves. So you have a BIG job to do for the Lord. Accept it with grace and love and be content in whatever situation you are in, at this time.

You may still be wondering what you can do to encourage your husband to come into the light of Christ with you? Understand that you cannot make anyone do anything that they don’t want to do. All you can do is be true to yourself at all times and in all situations. Continue to walk your talk in life;

be a righteous example, not a self-righteous example. Just live who you are?
Live what you believe!

- A. Build up your spouse with encouraging words. Find the qualities you appreciate about your spouse and tell them about it.
- B. Be patient with your spouse. This by far is probably one of the hardest things to do because they may be sinning in some way against the marriage and that can hurt. But remember you are not looking to pull your spouse further away from the light but to bring them into the light by your acts of kindness and consideration. Shine your light. Detach with love from those things that are against God's standards for living.
- C. Continue to stay faithful to God no matter what. Don't become tempted with your spouse. The good life is not lived on our own terms but is lived through the power of God and on His standards.
- D. Be joyful and happy knowing that God is with you and He is in control. Never give up!

Article Resources:

Choosing To Work on Your Marriage

<http://www.heavenministries.com/articles/choosingtoworkonyourmarriage.htm>

Marriage Take a Giving and Forgiving Attitude

<http://www.heavenministries.com/articles/marriagetakesagivingandforgivingAttitude.htm>

Until next Wednesday, May God bless you for His glory in His kingdom!
Angie and Frank---Heaven Ministries