

There are 3 ways to become married to an unbeliever.

The first way is **BY GETTING SAVED**.

You are an unbeliever (a non-Christian)—you might not even know that you aren't a Christian—and you marry an unbeliever. And then you hear the gospel, receive it, and get saved. Where does that leave you? Married to an unbeliever.

The second way to become married to an unbeliever is **BY BEING FOOLED**.

You are a Christ-follower, and you marry someone you think is a Christ-follower, but they turn out to not be a Christ-follower. What do you do? The Bible says that if they will consent to stay married to you, you stay married to them (1 Corinthians 7:10-16). So, you were fooled, and there you are married to an unbeliever. You need to know that there is much grace for you. You are not a second class citizen in the kingdom.

The third way is **BY BEING FOOLISH**.

That is, you are a Christ-follower and you know that this guy or this gal that you are interested in is not a true Christ-follower...but you marry them anyway.

Now, if you have done that foolish thing, there is grace for you, too. If you are married to an unbeliever because of foolishness, confess that to God, receive His grace, and begin to follow Him faithfully like you should. It won't be easy, but God is gracious.

I know that it is hard to be married to an unbeliever. There are so many issues that come up. But God gives grace to the humble. Let's look to verses 1-6 of 1 Peter 3 and see what counsel he gives to those who are spiritually single.

“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. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”

This passage is addressed to Christian wives who are married to NonChristian husbands.

Now, I know husbands can be spiritually single, too. But the majority of spiritually mismatched couples include a Christian wife (I think that's because of the power of male leadership—when a man believes the Gospel his wife more readily believes and follows as well).

We see at least four principles here for Christian women who are married to an unbeliever.

#1. SUBMIT TO YOUR HUSBAND. V.1 “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands.”

Wives should submit to their husbands as unto the Lord. Now, we might have thought that that principle wouldn't apply if you were married to an unbeliever. How do you submit to him? But in 1 Peter, submission to unbelieving authorities is also a major theme. It runs through chapters 2 and 3 and really shows up some in chapter 4. Peter says we are to “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men...” (2:13). And that includes Christian wives to unbelieving husbands.

Peter uses the example of Sarah (from Genesis) in v.6 “[Be] like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master.” Submit to Your Husband.

Now, this command is very simple, but it is not always easy. And in our culture, it is regularly laughed at and scorned. But as you can see here (in v.1 and v.6), it is the very word of God to us. “Wives, be submissive to your husbands.”

Now, don't forget what that does NOT mean: that a wife is somehow inferior to the husband in worth or value. Wives are not worth less than husbands (they are equal in Christ!). And it also doesn't mean that every woman is supposed to submit to every man. V.1 says, “YOUR husbands.” Not everyone's husbands. Your husbands. And it does not mean that the wife is to blindly, unthinkingly obey her husband's commands. It doesn't mean that there is never a time for discussion or even dissension. And it, also, certainly does NOT mean husbands subject your wives. Nowhere in the Scripture are husbands called to force their wives to submit to them. This is not an excuse for abuse. Peter calls upon Christian wives to voluntarily choose to submit. It takes a strong woman to do this.

However...it DOES mean to submit. Even if he is not a Christian. Especially (!) if he is not a Christian. V.1.

“Wives, in the same way [that everyone who is under authority is supposed to submit—even Jesus Christ did—chapter 2] 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.”

This does not say to capitulate to his religious preferences. This does not say sin with him or worship Allah at the Mosque with him. Or alcohol at the bar with him. This assumes disagreement and dissension in areas spelled out by your faith. When he wants to sin, go with God not with him!

But it does say submit to him, too. When you can, follow his lead. Let him call the shots for your family. Don't buck his leadership. Submit. Follow. Support.

Because it is walk, not talk, that wins the war for unbelieving husbands' hearts. There is a war on. It is much more important than the war on terrorism. It is a war for the souls of unbelieving husbands. And the battle is not won (primarily) with words. It is won (v.3) “without words by the behavior of their wives (v.2) when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.” Godly walk, not talk, wins the war for unbelieving husband's hearts. I think that's the same for unbelieving wives, too. Not as much by what we say, as how we live.

2. BEAUTIFY YOUR INSIDES. V.3

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.”

This is a strong word to the women of our day. Godly women spend their time, energy, and resources in beautifying their insides—their spirit, their heart—not their outsides.

So many women do not. The cosmetic industry in America is multi-billion. The women's clothes section of the department store is the biggest of all the departments. Some women can take hours in the bathroom getting their face ready to meet the day and not spend 15 minutes on their knees or in the Word.

Ask yourself what is going to last. External beauty? Maybe for a few years. But internal beauty is designed to last for millions of years throughout eternity.

Peter describes the kind of beauty that God sets a premium on as (v.4) “a gentle and quiet spirit.”

Now, that doesn't mean a woman who never talks or never makes a noise or is never extroverted around people. It's talking about a woman who has inner strength. A woman who in her spirit is not internally agitated and restless. A woman with serenity. Not a demanding woman but an accepting woman. A woman who gently accepts her lot in life and focuses on the Lord.

God values a woman who can internally trust in Him and peacefully live her life in an un-grasping manner. That's inner beauty! And you know it when you see it.

Do you want to be truly beautiful? Beautify your heart with gentleness and quietness of spirit. That's how the holy women of Old Testament history beautified themselves. They were great examples. "For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful." V. 5.

#3: HOPE IN GOD.

That's what it comes down to, isn't it? What are you hoping in?

- Are you hoping in your external beauty?
- Are you hoping in your popularity?
- Are you hoping in some guy, your husband even?
- Are you hoping in your hairstyle, your posture, your fashionable, designer clothes, your chic "new look?"

Don't! Peter says holy women hope in God.

Sarah's Daughters find their significance in God. Sarah's Daughters trust in God's promises. Sarah's Daughters bank on what God thinks about them not men. Sarah's Daughters look to God for their security.

What you hope in, defines your beauty. Hope in God. And you will not be ashamed or disappointed.

4,000 years later, we are still reading about Sarah who was beautiful in God's sight. V.6 "[They were submissive to their own husbands,] like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Sarah's daughters hope in God.

#4: DO NOT FEAR ANYTHING OR ANYONE (BUT GOD). V.6

"You are her daughters if you do what is right [submit, cultivate inner beauty, hope in God] and do not give way to fear."

Christian women are called to be fearless. Fearless of anything the world throws at them.

Because they hope in God. Fearless of anyone—including their unbelieving husbands! Because they fear God. God-fearing women need fear nothing else.

Not because they have "rights" or a good paying job or a stable marriage but because they have an unshakable God.

I know it's not easy to do when you live in the unstable world of being married to an unbeliever, but you belong to the King of the Universe and ultimately, you don't need to fear anything or anyone but Him.

I love that phrase in verse 6, "you are [Sarah's] daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

That's what I call classy, spiritually single ladies: *Sarah's Daughters*.

And I pray that those of you who are in that situation of being married to an unbelieving husband would be like Sarah: submissive, internally beautiful, hopeful, and fearless in God.

RESOURCES FOR THE SPIRITUALLY SINGLE:

Godmissionpossible.blogspot.com "Deborah's Blog is written to showcase God's Word and bring practical hope to the reader. 'Mission Possible' (the book) encourages women through scripture to believe that God's Word will transform their husbands and bring glory to God. Deborah invites the reader to join her as she candidly portrays her quest to reach her husband for Christ. Her goal is to share her personal testimony with others while bringing hope and practical help through her book."

Unequalmarriage.typepad.com is a web site which explores many difficult and often serious topics. This ministry acknowledges, "We can feel overwhelmed with the seriousness of life because our struggles are sometimes enormous." On this web site you will find practical help and encouragement to thrive in a *Spiritually Unequal Marriage*.

Winninghimwithoutwords.com Lynn Donovan and Dineen Miller have put together this web site based on their book which reaches out to wives living with unbelieving spouses. Pam Farrel, a relationship specialist, describes this book and this ministry this way, "Winning Him Without Words is a lifeline of hope and help for any woman who is struggling in a spiritually mismatched marriage."

What To do If You Are Married To An Unbeliever (Spiritually Single)

By Matt Mitchell