

***Question: My husband is a good man, but he is not a Christian. This has created problems in our marriage because he sometimes has expectations of me that are not consistent with my faithfulness to Christ.***

***What would Jesus do in my situation?***

Because religiously-divided marriages often create conflicts, some insist that it is wrong to marry outside one's own faith. It may be unwise, but it is not wrong. The Bible specifically addresses husbands and wives who are married to unbelievers, and it tells them not to divorce these unbelievers (1 Corinthians 7:12ff). You can still serve our Lord Jesus Christ, and you can have a good influence on your spouse.

Although Jesus was not married, he did have a similar divided situation in his earthly family. His brothers did not believe in Him as the Son of God (John 7:5). Family was important to Jesus, but the spiritual relationships found through a common faith took precedence. He would not allow his earthly family ties to hinder his work for the Heavenly Father. When told that his mother and brothers were waiting outside for him, Jesus responded: “‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother’” (Matthew 12:47-50). We must not mistake this response for a lack of caring or for insensitivity toward his family because Jesus continued to interact with and to be with his mother and his brothers (John 2:12; 19:25-27).

In a similar way, we need to maintain an appropriate balance between loving and caring for earthly family and faithfully serving God. Your spouse should be able to see how Christianity helps you to be a better person and a better wife. You should not need to compromise your Christian values and service. When your spouse sees your love and respect, even though you put Christ and your practice of faith first, he is more likely to respect you for your convictions. In this manner, Jesus eventually led his brothers to believe in him (Acts 1:14). It took persistence in faith and patience over time.

A later New Testament writer says: “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). In other words, be the most loving and faithful spouse that you can be. Practice the Christian virtues of kindness, patience and forgiveness. By doing these things, you will never have reason to be ashamed; and you may even lead your spouse into the family of God. I believe that is what Jesus would do. [Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12<sup>th</sup>, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: [www.nchrist.org](http://www.nchrist.org) ]

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