

Question: My husband is a good man, but he is not a Christian. This has created problems in our marriage in that 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 faith. It may be unwise, but it is not wrong for a Christian to be married to a non-Christian. 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 time in his earthly life in which he was spiritually divided from his family. His brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5) as the Son of God. 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 insensitivity toward his family because Jesus continued to interact 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. A non-believing spouse should be able to see how Christianity helps the Christian spouse to be a better person and a better marriage partner. One does not need to compromise Christian values or service. In fact, we must not compromise these things. When a spouse sees that he or she is loved and respected even though Jesus Christ and Christian service has a high priority, that spouse is more likely to respect the mate for his/her 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.

In a later writing, the Bible 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 win your spouse to the family of God. I believe that is what Jesus would do.

[Send questions or comments or request for a copy to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071, phone 270-753-1881 or email richardy@murray-ky.net] 2011/11/11