

Unequally Yoked:

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY OF GOD SEEKS TO BE MARRIED OR DOES MARRY OUTSIDE THE FAMILY OF GOD?

I. How was intermarrying viewed by God and His people in the Scriptures?

- A. *Genesis 24:1-4* Abraham's oldest servant is made to take an oath, that he will not find a wife for Isaac from the people of the Cannanites, but that he will find one from within the family of God.
- B. *Numbers 25:6-9* The hearts that were tender to the Lord wept at the fact that the family of God had intermarried with the Moabites. God shows His displeasure in sending a plague.
- C. *Ezra 9:1-4;10:1-4* Ezra as a leader pulls his hair from both his head and his beard. What the people of God have done is married outside the family of God. It is called a 'transgression' and being 'unfaithful to God.'
- D. *Nehemiah 13:23-29* Nehemiah strikes some of them and pulls out their hair. Their action is called 'sin' and it is called 'evil.'
- E. *1 Corinthians 7:39* If we, as Christians, are free to marry, we are to marry '**ONLY**' in the Lord.
- F. *2 Corinthians 6:11-16* This is an implicit command to not be bound together with unbelievers. The greatest bond of oneness according to God is marriage.

II. Was there any disciplinary action taken against this sin?

- A. *Genesis 24* No action was taken for the servant took his oath seriously. The implication was if he broke the oath, there would be ramifications.
- B. *Numbers 25* Yes God sent plague, and praised Eleazar for killing Zimri and Cozbi. In this God shows that discipline was necessary.
- C. *Ezra 9&10* Those who did not conform to this suffered loss of possession and position 10:8.
- D. *Nehemiah 13* Anyone in a visible position of leadership was removed from their post for intermarriage.
- E. *1 Corinthians 7* The positive command also has its opposite negative command. You do not marry outside of the Lord.
- F. *2 Corinthians 6* To marry someone who is not compatible with Spirit filled fellowship was not simply advice, but a Spirit instituted standard. To disobey would be sin.

III. Question: How do we know whether or not the intended spouse is a Christian?

A. Confession (Content)

- *Acts 16:30-31* “‘Sirs what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.’ ”
- *Romans 10:9* ‘If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you shall be saved.’
- *1 John 4:2* ‘By this we know the Spirit of God; every spirit that confess Jesus has come in the flesh is from God.’
- *1 Thess. 4:14* ‘For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.’

B. Conduct

- *Acts 2:38* ‘Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ because of the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’
- *Hebrews 10: 23-25* ‘Let us hold fast our confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day approaching.’
- *1 John 2:4* “the one who says, ‘I have come to know Him’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.”

IV. What immediate consequences will affect the Christian who marries an unbeliever?

A. Disharmony:

- The concept of being “yoked” is literally to be in step together. Furthermore, as the Spirit of God dwells within the believer, inviting an unbeliever to enter into that holy place is tantamount to profaning the very temple of God.
- *2 Cor. 6:14-18* Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. “Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me,” says the Lord Almighty.

B. **Covenantal Blessing:** The believer who enters into such a state forgoes the ideal picture of Christ-like love described in Ephesians 5:25-30. Furthermore, the admonition to raise children in the fear of the Lord (Deut. 6:7-9) will be in jeopardy. *This stands in contrast to the words of 1 Cor. 7:14 where the children are to be accepted in the church.*

V. What should the church do when a member willingly marries an unbeliever?

A. The Need for Biblical Discipline

- Ephesians 5:7-13 Christians are not to partake of the world's behavior, let alone bind themselves into a relationship with those who do.
- Titus 2:7-8 The actions of those in the church must not cause outsiders to blaspheme the name of the Lord.
- Matthew 18:15-20 Sin is to be dealt with in the proper way, and members are to be accountable to the whole church.
- 1 Cor. 5:12-13 Discipline must be applied to maintain purity in the church.
- 2 Cor. 2:5-11 Discipline is intended to correct and restore the offender.

When a believer falls into sin, and does not repent, it is necessary that the church pursue a course of action that results in a godly sorrow in the heart. But upon the testimony of their public confession and restitution (if applicable), members are to be restored to the body as soon as circumstances allow.

Austin Square has decided that members must submit to discipline if they persist in pursuing a marriage with an unbeliever. Such a course may result in consequences ranging from private sanction to dismissal from the church membership, depending on the attitude and response of the offender when confronted with the seriousness of this sin.

B. Should the marriage take place in a church? Should other church members attend?

Our policy states that we will only join two Christians in marriage. Furthermore, we only take the time to marry believers in our church building, in keeping with the purpose of the facility and the vows that must be a part of a Christian service.

- Matthew 19:1-10 God recognizes the marriage vows of all those who marry in the world. But this does not mean that He is pleased with them or that His wrath is lessened in regard to their unconverted state. Intermarriage, or the joining of others outside the people of God, was not to be carried out by priests of Israel. In fact those who were not God's children were not even allowed near the temple, never mind into the temple to perform any kind of ceremony.

C. When should any discipline be implemented? Before the marriage or after the marriage? Should it be public or private? **Each church must decide.**

Note: These concerns do not apply to a Christian who comes to faith after they have already been married. 1 Cor. 7:10-13 actually specifically commands that such a believer remain married, so long as the unbelieving spouse will put up with it.