



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

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## Praying For Your Beloved Unbeliever

There are numerous Christians who are "spiritual widows." These Christians have spouses in the physical, emotional, and financial aspects of life. Yet, their spouses are unbelievers. Due to this, they are spiritually alone. These Christians cannot share the spiritual blessings and burdens with their spouses due to the fact their spouses are not in a personal relationship with God. The Bible refers to this situation as being "unequally yoked together."

In modern society, we are not familiar with the yoke. In biblical times, a yoke was used to control the oxen. A yoke consisted of a wooden bar with loops at either end. It was used to hold the animals' heads in place and maintain the balance between the two. The yoke was fitted around the necks of a pair of oxen, harnessing them together, making a team.

The yoke was constructed so as to force each ox to pull an equal share of the load. It bound the animals together. Therefore, if one pulled ahead or held back, the other member of the team would be hindered. The yoke actually caused pain, choking the one who pulled ahead or pinching the neck of the one who lagged behind. Because of this, the oxen kept a common pace, moving in the same manner and traveling in the same direction.

When Paul uses the term "unequally yoked," he is declaring that a Christian who marries an unbeliever will be hindered in his or her walk with the Lord. This situation will restrict his or her freedom in Christ. It will cause an imbalance of the spiritual responsibility in the relationship. And, it will cause pain and discomfort for the believer.

These things will be a reality because the Christian is harnessed to a person who does not believe or feel the same things that the Christian does. The Christian wants to live a holy life. The unbelieving spouse is dominated by the sinful nature and the ways of the world. The Christian wants to know God and serve Him. The unbeliever is selfish and wants to pursue the things of the world. It is a continual struggle because two people who have been harnessed together are attempting to go in opposite directions.

The Christian who is caught in this situation goes through a wide range of feelings. He or she wonders how much to confront his or her spouse with the truth of the gospel. This often creates conflict and friction in the marriage. Then, the Christian spouse draws back, feeling defeated. A spirit of compromise often sets in at this point. And, in the midst of all this, the Christian spouse grows weary at heart from the heaviness of the burden. To some extent, the Christian spouse may be happy in the marriage. Yet, that Christian spouse is not comfortable or complete due to the unbelief of the other.

How can Christians become unequally yoked? The first way is the most common way. An unbeliever marries another unbeliever. Then, at some point later in the marriage, one of the unbelievers becomes a Christian. A second way is when a Christian marries a non-Christian, thinking the person is a believer. This is a lack of discernment on the Christian's part. The Christian honestly

## HAVING TROUBLE WITH PRAYER?

As you read this newsletter, it is my hope and prayer that you are stirred and motivated to pray and spend time with God. The goal of this newsletter is to lead people into deeper fellowship with God by helping people to pray more effectively and consistently. Yet, it is necessary that I remind you of two basic truths concerning prayer.

**First, the only people who can pray and have fellowship with God are those who have a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ.** The privilege of prayer belongs only to those who have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ by faith and repentance. God becomes your Father only when you turn from your sin and to Christ in true faith (**Galatians 3:26**)! It is impossible to know God or pray to God unless you have turned from your sin and surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ in true faith (**John 1:18; 5:37-38; 14:6, 10-11, 24**).

If you have never done this, your prayers are dead and useless. You must acknowledge your sin to God (**Exodus 20:1-20; Romans 3:9-20, 23**). You have failed to do what God commands and you have done what God forbids. Therefore, you are guilty, condemned, and headed to an eternity in hell. Yet, God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to save sinners (**John 1:29; 3:16-19; Acts 4:12**). You must turn from your sinful, selfish lifestyle to Jesus Christ, trusting Him as your Savior and surrendering to Him as your Lord and Master (**Luke 13:1-3; Romans 10:9-10**). The problem in your prayer life may be that you have never come to know God in a personal relationship. It is only when you know God through Jesus Christ that you can truly pray and have fellowship with God.

**Second, you must be pursuing a holy life to have a powerful prayer life.** You may be thinking, "I know I am a Christian. Yet, my prayers seem so lifeless and dead." When teaching how to pray, the Lord Jesus declares to pray to your Father "who is in heaven." The Lord Jesus Christ is emphasizing the fact that your Father is a holy and sovereign God. Those who enter into His presence must be dealing with the sin in their lives. You cannot be complacent with sin and expect to have power in prayer. You cannot go for days without confessing personal sin and expect God to honor and answer your prayers.

The Bible says in Psalm 66:18, "**If I regard iniquity (sin) in my heart, the Lord will not hear.**" You cannot harbor or cherish sin in your life and at the same time expect to have power in prayer. **START READING PSALM 15 ON A DAILY BASIS!! BE DILIGENT TO CONFESS YOUR SINS DAILY!** Ask God to reveal your sin to you. Confess that sin and forsake it (**1 John 1:9**).

does not know that he or she is marrying an unbeliever. Many times there are signs that the person is an unbeliever, but the Christian ignores these.

The third way that a Christian becomes unequally yoked in through ignorance. There are Christians who have never been confronted with the fact that they are not to marry an unbeliever. They have never been taught that God commands them not to be unequally yoked. This is not an option for the believer. God commands believers to date and marry believers. Some believers have never been taught God's truth in this matter and end up marrying an unbeliever.

The final way that Christians can become unequally yoked is through direct disobedience of God's command. Some Christians disregard what God says in this matter and marry unbelievers. This is a sin and will lead to pain and misery. It is unthinkable for a believer, who belongs to God and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, to link up with someone who belongs to Satan and is under his control. Yet, some Christians who are controlled by hormones, emotions, or desperation, forsake God's truth and marry unbelievers. These believers form an unholy alliance while they have already pledged themselves to a holy union with the living God.

This unholy union will have a tremendous negative impact on the Christian. There will be constant conflict about differing values and beliefs. The children will be faced with a contradictory message: one parent who loves Jesus and lives for Him and another parent who loves sin and lives for the world. The Christian spouse is often forced to choose between the Lord and the spouse he or she loves. The Christian spouse is plagued by the fact that the unbelieving spouse is lost in sin and is going to hell. The Christian spouse is plagued by the fact that he or she cannot turn to the person they love the most for spiritual comfort or encouragement. And, the Christian suffers from oppression by living in the presence of evil.

Regardless of how a believer becomes unequally yoked with an unbeliever in marriage, there is hope. The believer who is in this situation is not hopeless or helpless. The believing spouse does not have to give in to depression, frustration, or defeat. Through his or her relationship to God, the believing spouse can find the strength and help to deal with this situation.

The key to dealing with being married to an unbeliever is prayer. Prayer is the channel through which God gives His blessing, His power, and His help. It also makes the way for God to work in the family. As the believing spouse yields himself or herself to God in prayer, the power and blessings of God flow into the relationship and the family. Without prayer, there is no hope for this situation.

The following prayer requests are offered to guide the believing spouse in how to pray in this difficult situation. These requests will enable you to seek God for the help, strength, and power you need to deal with this situation. These requests can also be used by those who know believers who are married to unbelievers. Other believers can take these requests and use them to intercede for the believer who is in this situation.

- (1) **The salvation of the unbelieving spouse** (John 3:15-16; 14:6; 1 Timothy 1:15);
- (2) **That God would give the believing spouse hope and peace in what appears to be a hopeless situation** (Philippians 4:7);
- (3) **That God would protect the believing spouse from depression and despair** (Proverbs 17:22);
- (4) **That the believing spouse will live a godly life before the unbelieving spouse** (1 Peter 3:1);

(5) **That God would enable the believing spouse to see that he or she can depend on God for everything** (Proverbs 18:10). The believing spouse often feels alone in this situation. Yet, this believer must come to understand that in his or her personal relationship with God, he or she has everything that is needed to face any situation. Knowing God personally and walking with Him daily provides all the power, blessing, hope, and strength that a person needs to cope.

(6) **That they will be true friends to each other** (Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; John 15:13; 1 Peter 3:8). Even though they do not share in spiritual realities, those involved in this kind of marriage need to share everything else. This friendship could lead to the opportunity to share the gospel with the unbelieving spouse;

(7) **That the believing spouse will do what he or she can to please the unbelieving spouse** (Proverbs 12:4).

(8) **That God would enable the believing spouse to show his or her disapproval of the unbelieving spouse's sinful lifestyle, words, or actions without being condemning and judgmental** (Proverbs 31:26). The prayer requests in Numbers 7 and 8 provide a balance. On the one hand, the believing spouse needs to do everything possible to please the unbelieving spouse. This is a matter of kindness and love. Yet, this cannot be allowed to develop into a spirit of compromise. The believing spouse needs wisdom to know how to please the unbelieving spouse. At the same time, the believing spouse needs wisdom to show disapproval of those things that are contradictory of the Word of God;

(9) **That God would enable the believing spouse to be faithful in his or her relationship to God and His church** (Matthew 22:36-38; Hebrews 10:25). The believing spouse must continue to maintain his or her relationship to God even though the other spouse sees no need for this;

(10) **That God would enable the believing spouse to be faithful to the unbelieving spouse in the marriage commitment** (Proverbs 5:18-19; Hebrews 13:4);

(11) **That God would grant the believing spouse the wisdom to know when to share the gospel and when not to share the gospel** (James 1:5; Proverbs 17:27-28; Matthew 7:6);

(12) **That God would enable the believing spouse to provide spiritual leadership and guidance for the children** (Deuteronomy 11:18-19; 32:45-46). This request is especially needed when the woman is the believer. The man is to be the spiritual leader of the home. Yet, when the man is an unbeliever, the believing wife needs strength and wisdom to provide spiritual leadership and guidance for her children. Because the man will not do this, the responsibility falls to the believing wife and she needs wisdom and strength for this task;

(13) **That the believing spouse will honor and respect the unbelieving spouse** (Proverbs 31:12);

(14) **That the believing spouse will confess and repent of disobeying God** (1 John 1:9). If the believing spouse disobeyed God and married an unbeliever, this has to be dealt with by confession and repentance. There can be no spiritual blessing and power in an unequally yoked marriage until this sin is confessed and repented of by the believer;

- (15) **That the believing spouse will be filled with the Spirit and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit** (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:22-23);
- (16) **That the believing spouse will do all that he or she can to provide an atmosphere of harmony in the home** (Romans 12:18);
- (17) **That the believing spouse will be sympathetic** (1 Peter 3:8);
- (18) **That the believing spouse would be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving** (Ephesians 4:32; 1 Peter 3:8; Mark 11:25);
- (19) **That God would grant the believing spouse with the wisdom and strength to respond in a Christlike way when the unbelieving spouse persecutes him or her for his or her relationship to Jesus Christ** (Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; 29:22; Romans 12:14);
- (20) **That the believing spouse will be humble in spirit** (1 Peter 3:8);
- (21) **That God would cause the believing spouse to know that He is with him or her and that he or she is not alone in this struggle** (Isaiah 41:13; 43:2);
- (22) **That God would give wisdom to the believing spouse that he or she would know how to make the needs of the unbelieving spouse a priority without compromising his or her relationship to Jesus Christ** (James 1:5);
- (23) **That God would protect the believing spouse if the situation is abusive, whether physically or emotionally** (Psalm 3:7; 145:14);
- (24) **That God will surround the believing spouse with godly faithful friends who will listen, help, and pray for the believing spouse** (Proverbs 17:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12);
- (25) **That God would give the believing spouse the assurance of his or her salvation** (1 John 5:13);
- (26) **That the believing spouse will know that God does care and listens to his or her prayers** (1 Peter 5:7);
- (27) **That the children in this situation would be protected emotionally, physically, and spiritually** (Psalm 127:3);
- (28) **That God would heal the emotional pain that the believing spouse experiences in this situation** (Psalm 145:14; 147:3; Romans 12:12, 15).

Whom shall I marry? This is one of the most serious questions that a person will ever think about in his or her life. For the Christian, this is not a matter that one can think about and decide without seeking God's guidance and blessing. The Christian belongs to God; the Christian does not belong to himself or herself (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). This simply means that the Christian no longer has the right to make choices without seeking God and seeing what the Word of God teaches about the decision. You no longer have the right to make choices apart from God and what His Word teaches.

The Christian's body belongs to God; it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. If you are a Christian, you are not free to treat your body any way that you choose to treat it. You are no longer to think of your body as your own to do with as you please. You are to honor God with your body and your life. You are to honor God with your choices.

In marriage, you are entering into the deepest possible union with another person. This means that a Christian must always ask, "Is this person I want to marry a person that God wants me to marry?" Because you belong to God, you are not free to choose on your own. You are not free to go solo on this decision.

The Christian church is being greatly damaged because many believers have either ignored or neglected this fact. Too many believers marry without any concern for what God says in His Word. They believe that the Bible is for "spiritual things": praying, worshipping, giving, and witnessing. They feel that the choice of who they marry is left solely to them, their likes and dislikes, their wants and their needs.

Yet, the Word of God speaks to every area of life, including marriage. The Christian is to seek to understand what God says about marriage. Then, the Christian is responsible for using this in looking for a mate. What are the basic guidelines of the Word of God for seeking a mate?

### **The Biblical Guidelines For Seeking A Mate**

The first guideline from the Word of God for seeking a mate is that you are to marry a believer and only a believer. You are not free to marry an unbeliever. The Bible teaches that you are to marry a person who belongs to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7: 39). You are not to join yourself in marriage to a person who has not been genuinely saved by God (2 Corinthians 6:14). No matter how you feel, you are not to date and you are not to marry unbelievers. God will not lead you to date or marry an unbeliever. If you think that He has, you have been deceived by "the father of lies" (John 8:44)!

Before you condemn me as insensitive and cruel, this is not my rule. This is God's command. God did not give this command to keep believers from marrying. He gave this command to prevent believers from marrying the wrong person. He gave this command to prevent believers from a difficult and heartbreaking life due to being married to an unbeliever.

Why does God forbid Christian to marry unbelievers? There are several distinct reasons:

(1) **Marriage to an unbeliever is marriage to a potential enemy for life.** I do not want to deny or doubt that God in His mercy sometimes saves an unbelieving partner. This does happen. Yet, this does not alter the fact that generally unbelieving spouses remain unconverted. Whenever a believer marries an unbeliever there is the very real possibility of a life long partnership with a partner who will be Christ's enemy (Notice the words of Jesus in John 8:44 and John 15:18-19). There can be no real peace between the two seeds, the children of God and the children of the devil (Genesis 3:15). To