

6 Ways to Help Get a Non-Christian Spouse to Pray With You

It sounds trite but seems true. The family that prays together stays together. But what do you do if your spouse is not a Christian?

Here's a recent scenario I experienced with a friend of mine:

We sat outside in the plaza of a coffee shop. He looked worn out, tired and frustrated. He sighed out in anguish, "I've retained an attorney. I have no other choice. We're just not getting along. She wants to live like she's still single. I want to have a marriage and a peaceful home. She wants to party. I want a wife that will pray with me and believe God for a great life. She's just not the person I thought she was."

Although I am not a marriage counselor and seldom take on the daunting task, I did offer my friend some advice. I suggested he stop trying to fix her and make or mold her into a religious woman and begin to be the husband he should be. I explained that the word, husband, means, "husbandry"; it means to "cultivate."

He needed to speak words as if they were seeds planted within her for an expected harvest in return. Rather than focus on what she is not, pay attention to what attracted you to her in the first place. Show gratitude for her and treat her as a beautiful bride, rather than an unclean person who doesn't know God.

He left that day with a small glimmer of hope. He called the attorney to put the divorce process on hold and began to do what I suggested. Within a year, not only was their marriage

saved, they were thriving with a new child and a peaceful and prosperous home. She began to attend church with him, and they began to pray together.

I later asked, "When was the breakthrough in your marriage?"

He said, "One day, she was facing a difficult situation at work. She was overwhelmed with stress from it. I gently took her hand and asked, 'Do you mind if I speak a blessing over your day at work?' Amazingly, she said, 'Please, I need it.' That was the beginning of it all."

Here are some steps to get a non-Christian spouse to pray with you:

1. Don't consider them unclean or inferior. This is one of the most crucial mistakes we make in relationships. This attitude reeks with judgmentalism. It repels our spouse as if our religion is a bad odor. The Apostle Paul said, "For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband" (1 Cor. 7:14).

Your example of faith will have a cleansing effect on your unbelieving spouse. Paul also said, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25-26). In other words, speak kind and comforting words that build up, encourage and strengthen your spouse. Don't speak negative words and expect positive results.

2. Create and protect the atmosphere of your home. Don't allow strife to enter in. Where there is strife, there is every evil work. Don't underestimate the destructive power of strife. It's obvious that music creates an atmosphere. Television can have a huge impact on the home. Nothing can set the tone of the home like your words.

3. Attend a church that supports healthy, positive relationships. Attend a church that promotes the ideas of healthy marriages. One that provides safe and nurturing programs for children. Has the fruit of your pastor's teaching produced a healthy family in his home? Does the leadership in your church model a strong family life? If a leader cannot be faithful to his own marriage, what makes you think he will honor yours?

4. Keep your relations confidential. My friend confided in me regarding his marriage, but I quickly pointed the conversation to him and his issues, not hers. She wasn't there to be in the conversation so it would have been inappropriate to talk about her. Guys, no locker room talk. Don't talk about your sex life. Ladies, don't belittle or demean your husband to your girlfriends. Keep your marriage bed holy.

5. Show gratitude for your spouse. Your spouse connected with you. Your dreams and your ambitions are all part of the shared hope you have together. Don't stop dreaming together.

Speak kind and comforting words. I saw this example in Scripture, and it overwhelmed me with the character of God. During a vision in the night, a prophet named Zechariah was involved in a dialog with angels and the Lord. When the angels reported what they had found on the earth, Zechariah says the Lord turned and spoke, "kind and comforting words to the angel."

This example shows how gracious the character of God is toward the angels. I often remember this example when it comes to my response to my wife. I often reflect on my conversations asking, "Did I treat her with the respect that God treats his angels?"

6. Continue to court one another. A few years ago, I realized I had slipped into the daily grind of life and stopped pursuing my wife. I changed that by asking her out on a date.

I hired a babysitter. I made reservations at a restaurant and a hotel. We had a wonderful time. Interestingly, during that date our intimacy wasn't just physical, it became spiritual. I remember hearing a concern she had for our family and responded later at the hotel, "Honey, I know you're concerned about this, and I think we should take some time to pray about it." We did.

I wasn't raised in a religious home. My experience has come from reading the Bible and attempting to make myself a better man, an example of faith for my family to follow. My faith is not expressed in a long list of do's and don'ts, but in a deep and passionate desire to be the kind of man that inspires faith in others, especially to my wife.

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