

Unequally Yoked? 5 Ways You Can Love and Bless Your Unbelieving Spouse

Being married to a nonbeliever can feel a lot like going to war in your own home daily. The disagreements that arise can feel defeating and make you feel like it's you versus your spouse. But I believe the Bible when it says, "Love covers a multitude of sins" in 1 Peter 4:8b. If you're struggling to love, here are some practical ways to bless your marriage that you can do today.

1. **Pray:** When was the last time you prayed for your spouse? Like, really prayed for them? More than "God save them." I'm guilty of this myself. If we are serious about keeping our marriage healthy, we've got to pray like it. Pray for their day and for them to be blessed. Pray for God to show up in extraordinary ways and that they feel loved by Him. Pray they do well at work. Pray for their friendships and their families. Pray for blessings over your marriage. Pray for them to be a kind, generous, loving parent (if you have or are planning on having kids). Pray that God uses them in their unbelief. Pray for protection from the enemy for them. If you aren't sure where to start, there are lots of books available as a resource for praying for your spouse.
2. **Cut them some slack:** As a believer, we are held to some standards that our unbelieving partners are not. In our union of marriage and becoming one, it's hard to watch our significant others indulge in things that we shouldn't. But holding them to the same standard isn't fair and can be damaging to our relationships.

The Bible talks about not being drunk (Eph. 5:18, Rom. 13:13,

Gal. 5:21), so I don't drink all that often, but if I do, I limit myself to tolerance level. I used to hold my husband to this standard. I would be so upset and offended when he would become intoxicated. But the truth is, he isn't a Christian, so why would he abide by the Bible? Just because we believe something and want to live by, doesn't mean we can expect our partners to do the same. They may even encourage us to indulge in activities with them. These moments are where it feels like we are at war. Have a conversation with your spouse about your boundaries. Ask them not to cross them and not to invite you to participate in something that would cross them. Lovingly explain why this is important to you.

Are there any ways you are holding your spouse accountable in areas where you shouldn't be (such as going to church with you, substance use, TV/movie viewing options, places they like to go and so on)? Prayerfully consider where you might be hindering your significant other and ask God for help.

*This doesn't include harmful behavior such as abuse, substance abuse, affairs and so forth. If this is the case, please seek help.

3. Read a marriage book, or two or three: There are so many fantastic books on marriage! I'll limit my advice to three.

1. Gary Chapman's *The Five Love Languages*. This book has been so helpful in my marriage, learning about my spouse and learning how I can make him feel loved.
2. *How We Love* by Milan and Kay Yerkovich is phenomenal. Hands down, this book helped our marriage the most out of anything we've done so far.
3. Lastly, I recommend a gem titled *Surviving a Spiritual Mismatch* by Lee and Leslie Strobel. This book has so much godly wisdom for pursuing your unbelieving spouse and encouragement for when it feels like nothing is working.

4. **Plan biweekly date nights:** Dates are crucial for any marriage to thrive. Just because you don't have the same foundation, doesn't mean you can't enjoy some time together doing something you both like. Take turns picking the outing and pray for your time together.
5. **Write down the good:** Make a list of all the good things that have happened in your marriage. Write out your spouse's strengths and all the things that made you fall in love with them. Focus on the good, and thank God for being present in your marriage. If you don't have a long list, don't feel bad. Look at your writing with expectancy to fill up pages and pages to come with what God can do. When we focus on the blessings and have thankful hearts, we put ourselves in a position to be used by God. With God, you got this! {eoa}

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