

## Dating Outside The Church

Pitfalls of Being Unequally Yoked

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During my second sermon at the Feast this year I made a statement that several young people and even some of the older singles misunderstood. They thought what I said gave them "permission" to date and marry outside the church. I want to state very clearly that this is something that I do not recommend in the least. What I said was indeed misunderstood, because dating and marrying outside the church is a massive stumbling block and can only bring trouble in future years.

I want to go back and re-quote what I said during the Feast so you can understand the background of all this. I made a transcript of that portion of the sermon so I could repeat it to you today just so you can hear it again.

I know others who have married someone right out of the world, and they are now converted members of God's church. This is not the normal way it should be done, but it happens every once in a while. If God is working, if God is calling that person, He finds a way to bring him into His church, but always the point is conversion.

I think people heard that and stopped at the first sentence—"I know others who have married someone right out of the world, and they are now converted members of God's church." When they heard that they stopped listening to my qualification of that. My very next sentence was, "This is NOT the normal way it should be done, but it happens every once in a while."

I can see how someone can misconstrue that, especially if they are not listening fully to the whole explanation. But I want to make it very clear that the Church of the Great God does *not* teach that dating outside the church is wise. We do not teach that it is a good thing that our young people and older single people should date outside the church. It is not good. It is not wise. We teach that baptized members should *not* date outside the church, and that baptized parents should not allow their minor children to date outside the church. Once children reach their maturity and still are not baptized, we then hope that they will decide not to date in the world because it is a trap that rarely produces good results.

In the remainder of today's sermon I would like to explain the reasons why God does not

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want our single people to date and or marry outside His church. There are many reasons, and they are good reasons—they are very strong spiritual reasons which to me are quite convincing when you look at them from a spiritual point of view from the Spirit of God.

God is producing in us something that is very special and very precious. He is producing children much like Himself, and anything that gets in the way of that is not good. Dating outside the church, and marrying outside the church, only makes that process the harder. If you want to be one of God's children in His Kingdom, you do not want to make it any harder on yourself. God warns us many times in the Scripture not to do this. He does not say, "Don't date outside the church," but He says it in other ways that are very clear.

Let us begin with the classic passage in Scripture on this subject—II Corinthians 6:11. I am going to read all the whole way through to II Corinthians 7:1 because whoever put the chapters and numbers on these verses did a poor job in this section here because the section goes from verse 11 all the way to verse 1 of chapter 7.

**II Corinthians 6:11-18** O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open. Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

**II Corinthians 7:1** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

When you read the whole passage like that, it really opens up some understanding of what he was getting at here.

The passage begins with an appeal from Paul for the Corinthians to treat him with the same openness and affection that he gave them. He mentions there, "as to children,"—that he was speaking as to children. He wanted the same kind of affection and respect and honor and openness that a child would give to his father. In turn he would then treat them like a father would treat a son or a daughter, with the same kind of affection and respect and honor that would happen in a normal good family relationship. That is what he wanted with them.

He launches into this exhortation—"not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers—with this idea: "Look, I've got something hard to say to you, but I'm being entirely open with you and I'm treating you with the love that you deserve, and I want you to treat me with the same respect and love by accepting my advice and my instruction."

He showed his love for them by giving them the hard truth, and he wanted them to return or respond with the same love by accepting it and listening to what he said, just as our fathers would give us the advice we need whether we wanted it or not. If we truly were showing love, then we would take it for what it was worth, and respect it by doing it.

We have to remember that we are talking about the Corinthians here. They were a special case in the church because Corinth was a very bad city. You would not want to live there. I do not want to go into all the particulars there, but it had perversions that we probably do not see in our world in very many places. It was a crossroads for all sorts of bad things. It was a trading route and a lot of shipping was going through there. The people in Corinth were used to quite a bit of perversion, and that is what they were coming out of.

Remember, in I Corinthians 3 Paul says, "Corinthians, you are still carnal." This is the base that he is going from because these people had a long way to go in many respects. They had one leg in the world still, and one leg in the church, and they were trying to balance the one off the other. They were trying to not let go to all of the things they had in the world that they felt were beneficial to them, and fully grab on to what God was offering them. There was still a tug-of-war in them, whether they were going to go one way or the other.

These books open up basically with the idea that there was someone in the church who had married his mother-in-law, or however it was. There was incest, and Paul says, "These are things that the Gentiles don't even speak of, and it shouldn't even be considered in the church." So we are talking about a church congregation here that was

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very worldly and they still had quite a few intimate ties to the world. Paul said, "This is the hard truth. You've got to sever those ties because they're dragging you down."

He is not necessarily talking about marriage here, or dating. He is talking more generally about any sort of ties with the world that were more intimate and personal and time-consuming even. These were ones where they spent a lot of time and effort in pursuing worldly things, and Paul says, "Look. You're an entirely different creature now. You should be, and you have to let go of those things because your life has begun anew, and you have to live it God's way entirely."

What we can get out of this is that it is almost impossible—I would say it probably is impossible—for converted members of God's church to have the best of both worlds, because the two systems, the two ways of life, are incompatible. "Love not the world, nor the things in the world," [1 John 2:15-17] because this world is passing away. We also have, "Come out of her My people." [Revelation 18:4]

There are many scriptures in the Bible where God tells His people to come out of those areas where we can be dragged back into the world—dragged back into the systems that we were called from.

Paul's command here, his instruction, derives from God's instruction to Israel in Deuteronomy 22:10. If you read Deuteronomy 22:10, you might think it has nothing to do with this. But what does it say? It says, "You shall not plow with an ox and with a donkey together." Paul lifted that principle out of the physical law concerning agriculture and applied it to human relationships.

When you put an ox and a donkey in the same yoke, you have problems. Just in a physical sense, an ox and a donkey are different statures. The yoke does not even fit them properly. A donkey is normally taller than an ox. An ox is broader than a donkey. They are different lengths. They are different weights. There are different species with different temperaments. They do not pull the same. They do not go with the same measured stride.

If the poor plowman in the back is trying to control an ox with his plodding "Let's-go-I'm-going-to-do-this" kind of temperament, and a donkey, whose temperament is stubborn and might not want to go, you will have one side pulling, steadily plodding on and on, and you have the other one back on its heels trying not to go. They are not going to accomplish the job that the plowman is trying to do. That is the word picture here that Paul gives to us. You do not want to be unequally yoked like a donkey would be unequally yoked with an ox. It does not work. They do not pull the same.

Let us go to one of the most quotable scriptures in the church of God in the last fifty years. Mr. Armstrong used it just about every sermon, especially in the latter years of his life.

**Amos 3:3** Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

Same principle. Can two walk together unless they have the same ideas and beliefs and goals? The idea here in this verse is particularly that you have a meeting, and can two people walk together to this meeting unless they have agreed already on the time and the place. If they have not agreed on the time and the place, one will walk to the meeting and be there at the time that he thinks that it should be, and somebody else might even walk to a different place at a different time altogether, and what relationship is there going to be?

We say today that some walk to the beat of a different drummer. It is the same sort of thing. You walk to the beat that God is sounding from heaven, while an unconverted person walks to his own beat, and the two will not jive. What we are seeing here is the oil and water principle. Certain things just do not mix.

The Greek word for yoked means, among other things, allied, coupled, mingled, or united. You can stick any one of those words in there and they will make sense. You do not want to be unequally allied, unequally coupled, unequally mingled, or unequally united with unbelievers. Like I said before, though the context does not specifically mention marriage, it certainly is applicable to it.

Think of it. What closer allies are there than a marriage—a husband and wife? They should be the closest of allies, doing everything together, and doing the things for the common good of the family because of the special relationship. We even call them "couples." That is what this word means. We are to be united as one in the marriage covenant. Even though marriage is not contemplated necessarily in this specifically, it certainly fits, and maybe Paul had it on the top of his list. I do not know. I know he was speaking generally, but if he was thinking of anything specific, I am sure that marriage was one of the ones that he was most concerned about. Remember, the problem in I Corinthians was a marriage problem. The guy had married his own mother-in-law. So there you have it.

Paul then goes on and asks these questions. There are about five of them. What common ground is there between polar opposites? Think of the word polar. What do the north and south poles have in common, except that they are both ice-capped? They are

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thousands of miles apart. Think of it in scientific terms. In a magnet you have one pole that is positive, and it attracts. You have another one that is negative. (I will get to this idea of opposites attracting a little bit further down the line.)

The word "fellowship" in verse 14—"For what *fellowship* has righteousness with lawlessness?"—"commonality" may be a better word. The question is rhetorical, and the answer is obviously "none."

The second question is, "What communion has light with darkness?" This word could also be translated "fellowship." Maybe a better one is "participation." "What participation do these things have with one another—light with darkness?" Light and darkness do not mix. One is on one extreme of the spectrum, and the other one is on the other. All you get is a little hazy twilight in the middle. It is neither one nor the other.

The third question is: "What accord has Christ with Belial?" The word is a musical term. It means harmony. When people sing in harmony they sound good. But Paul says that there is no harmony between Christ and Belial. They are at odds. They are at loggerheads with one another. They do not mix.

The fourth question: "What part has a believer with an unbeliever?" This is a legal term, but it often had to do with agriculture as when an inheritance had to be split. So this could be, "What *share* has a believer with an unbeliever?" Let us say there were ten acres that were to be split among four or five sons. Each would get a share. That is the legal part of all this. Well put that right in there. "What kind of share does a believer have in the things of an unbeliever?"

The last question is: "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" That is pretty well translated. I could not find a better synonym for that. "Agreement" seems to work very well. Do they agree on anything? The answer rhetorically is, "No."

If we are intimately associated with God, which is what he is talking about here—"You are the temple of the living God. He has called you as His sons and daughters."—Paul says in verse 17 that we have to separate ourselves from these opposites that he has mentioned in earlier verses. In II Corinthians 7:1 he says we have to separate ourselves from what defiles—"from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

He is talking about pollutions or corruptions—anything that would soil us, anything that would drag us down. Then he says, on the other hand, we have to fill our lives with what is holy and good and true, and do this for our respect and reverence for God, because that is the sort of attitude and approach that is going to lead us into the Kingdom to be

His sons and daughters.

Practically speaking then, having an unconverted mate or dating outside the church, it is almost impossible to accomplish God's purpose in us. Some people have made it work and I give them a great deal of credit, but it has not been easy on any of them because there are certain things that just conflict.

I read in Adam Clarke, and he quotes an honest clergyman as saying, "A man who is truly pious, marrying with an unconverted woman will either draw back to perdition, or have a cross to bear during life." In short, this would be setting oneself up for failure, and only by a great strain would it be possible to make it work. If you do make it work, there are always those strains in the dark cloud of difference hanging over things.

Often times an unconverted mate is moral, because you are moral. You probably would not have gotten married if you had not been moral like he was, because to get married to anyone you have to have some common ground. But even if the unconverted mate is moral, it does not guarantee there will not be friction, because the two ways are so incompatible.

Just answer these questions. I will ask them rhetorically. How well can one keep the Sabbath with an unconverted person interfering? Many people who have an unconverted mate have reached a kind of compromise on that, and on Sabbath one goes one way, and one goes the other, and never shall the twain meet until sundown. But you noticed what they have had to do. They had to go "separate" for that period of time.

Now what about such things as unclean foods? What if one of them really likes pork chops? What about the conscience of the wife who may be converted and having to prepare pork chops for her husband? I am just talking practical little things that people may not think of.

What religion does one teach the children? I heard it on the radio not too long ago people talking about Jewish-Christian marriages, or Christian-Muslim marriages, or Christian-Buddhist marriages, or non-aligned non-religious with whatever other religion there is, and people saying how difficult it is to bring their children up in one religion or the other. Usually what they get is a syncretistic mix of both, or they are fairly liberal people and they say, "Well, when Johnny and Susie get to be eighteen they can decide for themselves." And then they just do not worry about it at all.

Going back to my "Parenting" series, if we are going to rear our children to be godly,

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and to be ready for God to call them when they reach a certain age, we have to think about those things. If we really want them to be in the church, there is going to be a fight with the unconverted mate on that subject. What does it teach the children that their parents do not agree on such a basic issue of life as religion? It seems to me it would start them off on the wrong foot not only religiously, but from the point of view of marriage. What are their marriages going to be like when they see this basic fundamental disagreement between their parents? How will it affect them?

An unconverted mate just simply complicates matters. Life is hard enough as it is, and to knowingly go into this situation where you make the choice to do so seems foolish to me. Now if you are already in the situation—if God calls you and not your mate—well, God must have figured that you could handle it, because He did it. But where you have the decision to either go into this situation or not, I would say do not do it.

Paul, in I Corinthians 7:15, gives permission for divorce between mates—one who is converted and one who is unconverted—if there is not peace between them, if the unconverted mate makes trouble with the converted mate worshipping God in the proper way. That should tell us how vital marital harmony is to successful growth in God's way of life. He would prefer in this case where there is strife between an unconverted mate and a converted mate, that we break the marriage covenant in order to keep our covenant with Him. Which is the more important?

This is specifically for one mate who is converted and one who is unconverted. He says specifically, very clearly, that if the unconverted mate allows you to do all these things in peace, fine. Leave it like that. But if there is trouble, and it is constant and it is dragging you down, there is no peace, there is no way that you can grow in that environment, he says it is okay to separate. It is not just a blanket thing, but only if these specific things are met. God comes first, and our marriages come second. In this case with an unconverted mate, he does give permission to divorce if God is being pushed aside.

What about our situation now in the church? The church has been scattered. Our churches are small. We are sometimes hundreds or thousands of miles away from any potential mate. We look and say, "Oh, there's no one to marry." Does this situation that we have of being spread out with few eligible potential mates give us more leeway under God's law?

The book of Genesis relates the story of a man and his wife who, rather than trusting God to give them what they desired, decided to take matters into their own hands. Here they were, in a land that was not theirs. There were not many Hebrews around. They were on their own. God had sent them there. It was His will that they do this, to go into a

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land of people of a totally different race. They were all alone, and they decided to do the expedient thing—what *they* thought was the expedient thing. And you know what? The world is still suffering for their jumping the gun. This is obviously Abraham and Sarah, and putting Hagar into the mix.

**Genesis 16:1-3** Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her. And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.

Notice that there was a marriage. Hagar became a secondary wife. I guess they figured ten years was enough. They gave God ten years, and if He did not do it by then they were going to go ahead and do their own thing. At least that is the way it seems.

**Genesis 16:4** So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

Suddenly there was strife in the camp of Abram. ("Never let two women in the same kitchen," I hear.) Well, this was a different type of kitchen, and one of them had the upper hand.

**Genesis 16:5-6** Then Sarai said to Abram, My wrong be upon you! [It is all your fault!] I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. [There are problems on both sides here. There is despising on the one hand, and on the other hand there is overbearing, and self-righteousness basically, because Sarai was the one that had come up with the solution as it was.] The LORD judge between you and me." [And boy did He!] So Abram said to Sarai, Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please. And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

**Genesis 16:15** So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

After this problem, when Hagar was out in the wilderness and God saved her, she bore Abram a son, Ishmael. The Arab-Hebrew conflict has not stopped since. Four thousand years of hostility from this one mistake, this one jumping the gun, this one time where they thought, "God has failed us. He's put us into an impossible situation. I'll solve it myself." And now we have how many Arabs facing how many Jews, and killing one another, blowing each other up, shooting bullets into one another, because they are fighting over this land that God had given to their father Abraham, and they both feel they have a right to it.

We can see that taking matters into our own hands, when faith and patience are required, can produce absolutely horrendous results. Now Abraham is a special case. He is the father of the faithful. The things that he did are magnified because of his position, but with us similar things can happen on a somewhat smaller scale. They are still awful to have to endure, and who knows what problems will be in future generations because of this.

Does not God say that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him? Obviously we do not hate God, but the principle is still there, and the results of sin often go down several generations. Someone has to take the punishment, whether it is us, or our children, or our grandchildren, or our great grandchildren. Mistakes have consequences.

Romans 8:28 is still in the Book. God will give us everything that is good that we need if we love Him and are "*the* called." It is there. It is a promise. He has not necessarily promised us a mate, but He has promised us what is good for us. If we just wait, have a little patience, and have some faith that God will give us whatever will help us and prosper us and be good for us, in His time. That certainly would include our mate. We ask Him in faith. God says He will give it to us, with the caveat that it would be something that is good for us, because He does nothing that is not out of love. That is just His nature.

In hindsight we can see how foolish this was for Abraham and Sarah to do this. But can we also see that the despairing about our current situation—our scattered condition—jumping the gun then and providing our own human solution will only complicate matters. Can we see that without having to look in hindsight twenty years down the road and say, "Oh, if only I had waited"?

It is far better to marry as a somewhat older wiser person *in* the church than it is to jump the gun and marry while we are young *outside* the church. That is just the way it is. It would be better for you to wait a little while until you are older and more mature and find

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someone in the church than it would be to take matters in your hands while you are young and foolish and do what your hormones are telling you to do. (I am speaking mainly of course to the young people. I hope the older ones have a little more control over their hormones.)

You could even ask, if you like, some of the recent newlyweds (and there were several this summer and this spring) how the scattering affected their choice of mate. I bet you they would tell you that the scattering actually enhanced their choice of mate. You think about the ones who have recently gotten married, and you will find that if this had not occurred, they would have never found the other, because circumstances were worked out that they came in contact with one another, and started a relationship which led to marriage.

So the scattering is not a bad thing. It may narrow things a bit for us, but we have got to think of it more positively, that if you do really love God and you really want something like this to happen to you, that God has orchestrated affairs to bring that about. Nothing is impossible with God.

Let us go to Psalm 37. This is the attitude we have got to have. This is one of my favorite Psalms. Remember I told you at the Feast that my favorite hymn in the hymnal is number 30—"Wait and Hope and Look For God." This is where it comes from.

**Psalm 37:3-4** Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

See, that is the way we have got to approach this. Trust in God. Go ahead and dwell in the land. Do good. Feed on His faithfulness. Think of God as a delight, and then lo and behold you will find that you will have the things that you really wanted.

**Psalm 37:5-7** Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

That last little bit advises you not to look at how other people are faring and how they have gotten what they have gotten. Wait and trust in God. He will bring it about what

you need, or what you want.

**Psalm 37:34** Wait on the LOORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.

**Psalm 40:1** I waited patiently for the LOORD, and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.

God does not always give us the things we ask for right away. Remember the scripture we heard several times during the Feast, that His eyelids test us? Oftentimes the test is whether we will wait for Him to act, whether we will have faith to do, to plod on, to do good, to be righteous in the meantime until He gives us the thing that we want. And if we really want a mate, we can put that on the top of our prayer list, and He will recognize that and give it, but it may be a little while. So wait and trust in Him to bring it to pass.

If God can create the universe, if He can part the Red Sea, if He can walk on water, He can find a mate that is fitting for us. That is an easy thing. Remember, we walk by faith, not by sight.

We can look around and say, "Oh! There's no one here to marry. I'll be an old maid—or an old gentleman, I guess." But that is not the case. That is walking by sight. God sees an awful lot more than we do. He knows what is going on. I have had people come up to me and say that they were sure that God prepared the husband or the wife for one of their children, that they could see by looking at events that certain things happened to bring it all to pass, that otherwise these two would never had met. Or otherwise maybe they would have met, but they would have never hit it off unless certain things had happened.

Some mothers I know have prayed for their children, saying, "Please prepare a fitting mate for this daughter of mine (or son of mine)." And it seems that God has answered those prayers in many cases. God is aware, and He wants us to have happiness. He wants us to have the mate that will be a helper comparable to us. So do not despair. Just wait patiently, and trust in Him.

Malachi 3:6 is another one of those memory scriptures.

**Malachi 3:6** For I am the LOORD, I do not change. Therefore you are not

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consumed, O sons of Jacob.

**Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Think of that. Do you think that this scattering of the church has changed God? Do you think the scattering of the church has changed God's law, or the principles that God has set down for our conduct? Do you think that just because we are scattered that all the principles of finding a mate have been thrown out the window and you can just go down the street and find someone? That is not the case at all. God says, "I do not change." Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The same principles that were good for us in the Worldwide Church of God fifteen years ago are just as applicable today, and a hundred years before that, and a thousand years before that, and two thousand years before that, and in the Garden of Eden. They are the same. Things do not change. God's law is immutable. Society can go through throes of tumult. It could go through transformations like you would never imagine. They could go from one end of the spectrum to the other, politically, socially, economically, whatever, and God's way of life would not change. See, that is part of our faith.

What if those things changed along with society? Could we trust God? We would never know which end is up if God's way changed along with everything else in the world. We can rely on God's faithfulness. We know that God is there and is going to act because of this fact that He does not change, and His law does not change. The principles do not change, and we can rely on that no matter what the situation. So it is still a bad idea to date and marry outside the church. That principle has not changed either.

Let me give you a few analogies. Just because you are stranded on a desert island and all you have is pig and shellfish to eat, does that change God's laws of clean and unclean meats? Now I know there are probably some who would say, "Well, you would be tempted to eat the pig and the shellfish." But you had better have a good diet of coconut. God will provide.

If America suddenly descended into anarchy for whatever reason—nuclear strike, racial problems, I do not know what, you name it—does that mean that we no longer would have to love our neighbor? Is that not an immutable principle found in the last six of the commandments?

If all your money were taken from you through one means or another, does that mean

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you could steal? Just because your situation changed does that mean that you could change the way you act? No. God's ways are unchangeable, and in this case the way to have a relationship and to finally marry is the same also.

Let us say you find "Mister Right," or "Miss Right," (you think) out in the world. You think you found a perfect candidate. What do you do? This is on the off chance that God is indeed calling that person. God does not say, "Hello down there. I'm calling this person. Go ahead and marry him."

What do you do if you find someone in the world you think might be right for you? Well, the first thing you do is that you do not compromise one inch with God's way of life. You have to be totally straight and narrow. Everything must be above board in this relationship. Do not get any further involved with this person until you take the next step, and that is, introduce him or her to your beliefs. Lay them out. Give them church literature to read. See if they are going to accept it, and you will know pretty quick by the reaction to the literature or to the beliefs whether God is actually calling that person.

If God is calling that person he will be receptive, and things will start moving. But if there is a lot of holding back and a lot of dismissal and saying, "You know, this is weird," or whatever they might happen to say, well, you had better drop that person like a hot potato. It is not going to work.

Now if they do respond, still do nothing until that person starts counseling for baptism and moves his conversion along. And do not get married until that person has been baptized, because conversion comes first. If God is truly calling that person, you wait until he or she is converted, and then you marry. Do not do it the other way around, because I am sure there have been times when that has happened, and the other person has done a U-turn because they wanted the girl, or they wanted the guy, and they were willing to do anything to get to that point of marriage. And then they put the brakes on and the whole thing came apart at the seams. And now you are stuck with an unconverted mate, and the problems will begin.

So that is my advice. If you indeed find somebody out in the world, take these very cautious steps, and make sure they are baptized before you do anything else. But it is rare. I am telling you now that it is very rare. It does not happen often, so be very cautious. As I said there at the beginning, I am not giving you my permission to do this. I think it is very stupid to date outside the church, but sometimes it happens, and you should know what to do if it should happen to you. But take it very cautiously.

It may be that if there is a person whom you give this literature to and they read it and

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they do not like it, that they will drop *you* like a hot potato because they will say, "What kind of a kook is this?" or "They have an awfully weird religion," or "Man, I couldn't give up my Saturdays," or "Give up shrimp? You're kidding." or whatever it happens to be. "Tithe?" There are all kinds of things that they might find objectionable.

If you are strong in what you believe, then that will either attract them further, or repel them further. So you are the anchor here in this. How you are willing to approach your beliefs will tell the tale in many cases.

Let us go back to Deuteronomy 7. I want to show you by doing a quick survey that this principle is throughout the Bible, that we should not get involved with people outside our religion.

**Deuteronomy 7:1-4** When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you . . . . and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

That is pretty dire. God says, "Don't intermarry with the heathen." Do not intermarry with people outside the faith. It causes problems. This is in the books of Moses here. He is already giving them this advice. It is far easier for a member of God's church to compromise in this manner than it is for the unconverted mate to come to repentance because of human nature and because of the exclusivity of God's calling. It is not a blanket calling. He chooses those He wants now, and He will call the rest later in His own time.

Let us see probably the best example of this problem in I Kings 11 in the example of Solomon. You would think that the wisest man would understand this principle, but boy, when he did something wrong, he did it in spades.

**I Kings 11:1-13** But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." [Deuteronomy 7:3-4]

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Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal [not faithful] to the LOORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the LOORD, and did not fully follow the LOORD as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. [It looks like he was in the altar building business. He had to do a thousand of them.] So the LOORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LOORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice [he had had personal communication with God twice and *still* he turned away], and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LOORD had commanded. Therefore the LOORD said to Solomon [this is the destruction coming on suddenly], "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away the whole kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

Pretty severe punishment. He had pretty much ten tribes taken from him and his son and all his progeny from that time forth. Not very nice to happen because of a "little" mistake.

Let us go to Nehemiah 13. This continues:

**Nehemiah 13:23-27** In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. [Back to

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Deuteronomy 7 again.] Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? [Back to I Kings 11] Yet among many nations there was no king like him who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?

This is not a small thing with God, because He does not want to see His chosen ones turned back to the pollution they came out of, so He keeps reiterating this: "Don't marry outside the faith."

**Malachi 2:10-12** Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the LOORD's holy institution [marriage] which He loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god. May the LOORD cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, being awake and aware, and who brings an offering to the LOORD of hosts!

That is a pretty dire curse. It is that *important*.

Now the principle of whom to choose in a marriage is the principle of "the girl next door," we will call it—someone that is as much like you as possible, who shares experiences, who shares interests, who shares tastes, and maybe most importantly who shares beliefs. The best marriages are generally those where the partners have the most in common. Those seem to work the best.

You may ask, "What about opposites attracting?" Well, that is true. Opposites do attract, but for the wrong reasons. It is usually because of the curiosity of them being so different. It is often the thrill of coming out of your shell, or out of your normal way of doing things. But the opposite-attracting principle, I guess you would call it, is a short-term one, not a long-term one. The long-term marriages are ones where they have a great deal in common, because after awhile, seeing this other person's opposite type of attitudes and approaches to things will repel. It will cause separation because you are going two different ways. "How can two walk together unless they be agreed? [Amos 3:3]

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Let us go back to Genesis 2. I want you to see what God did for Adam. This is our physical pattern here. What did God do with Adam?

**Genesis 2:7-8** And the LOORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The LOORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

**Genesis 2:18-24** And the LOORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him [not opposite of him, but comparable—someone just like him]." Out of the ground the LOORD God formed every east of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LOORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LOORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; ["She's just like me. She came from me." That is how much in common they had. They shared the same flesh.] She shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man." [Then Moses says} Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

This principle pops up in the second chapter of the book, that if you are going to get married, get married to someone who is comparable to you, not to somebody who is not comparable to you. What is the opposite of comparable? One who is totally opposite. One who runs perpendicular to you. It does not have the best chances as having a comparable helper, a comparable mate.

It is hard to be one flesh when both sides of the marriage are determined to do their own thing. So God says the ideal then is to find that soul-mate who fits like a glove, even those who anticipate your every thought, who finishes all your sentences! That is what you are looking for, someone that you feel very comfortable with because they are a lot like you.

Now what about our spiritual pattern?

**Revelation 19:6-8** And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

Christ is our standard, is He not? He is the One we are to pattern ourselves after. We are supposed to take His example and apply it to our own lives. And what is He doing now? Well, He is preparing a bride for Himself. And not only preparing a bride, but a bride that is just like Him, so much so that we are so much like Him to the point that not only will He be our future Husband, but He is also our elder brother.

He is the Head of the body. We are His body, just like Eve came from Adam. She was his body, from a rib. So just like He formed Eve from the bone of Adam, He is forming us to be righteous and holy like Him. And then we will not be one flesh, we will be one spirit, and one God family. That is the ideal, and that is what we should pattern our physical marriages after—to someone who is comparable to us.

I want to end this sermon on a hopeful note because the present situation of the church is not encouraging to most single people. I have heard a lot of despair out there from the young people, especially the girls it seems, that there is just not anyone to marry. They take it to extremes—"There's no one!!" And even though that is an exaggeration, I can understand the feeling behind it, the hopelessness that is there. Granted, potential husbands and wives are few and far between, but there is no reason to despair. We have on our side the One who can get the impossible done. Can He prepare a table in the wilderness?" Moses asked. Of course He can. Can He find us mates amidst the scattered church? Of course He can.

**Ephesians 3:20-21** Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

If He can do anything even beyond what we can even imagine, He can provide mates for our children.