

COMPATIBILITY IN MARRIAGE – PART 1

Ezra 10:10-11 ... “Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them [the people of Israel], “You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives.”

Today, we will speak of the importance of God’s instruction for us to be spiritually compatible in marriage. The prophet Ezra confronted the Israelites who were marrying people from among God’s enemies; people of different faiths who worshipped false gods, which God explicitly prohibited. When we speak of “different faiths,” we are not talking about different Protestant denominations, such as Baptists marrying Wesleyans, or CAMACOP members marrying Assemblies of God members. More marital stress occurs when people of one belief, marry persons who have significantly different beliefs – or no beliefs. This can even occur when Catholics marry Protestants, because their church doctrines are very different and may require more compromise than either the husband or wife is willing to sustain after the honeymoon is over. It causes friction between in-laws which, in turn, creates problems for the couple. This is not to say that God forbids Catholics from marrying Protestants; it only reveals that differences and compromises may be challenging.

The greater problem occurs when a Christian (Catholic or Protestant) marries a non-Christian, such as a Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or of another religion, including an atheist. People of other faiths (or no faith) may be very good people. However, the spiritual mismatch of their union will create constant tension and disagreement. Plus, the disobedience – sin – of a Christian marrying outside his faith, separates him from Christ, which makes life even more difficult.

If you married a person from another faith (or no-faith), please do not heed the command of Ezra to Israel to abandon their wives. That command does not apply to us. New Testament teaching in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, instructs us not to divorce one another, even if the spouse is an unbeliever. If you unwisely married someone outside your faith, you must remain loyal to that person, confess your sin to God, and then do your best to demonstrate the love of Jesus to your spouse. You may have to live with conflict and tension, but the greater sin is to abandon a spouse. If you are not yet married, please obey God’s teaching not to be joined with people of other faiths. Marrying a person of a different faith will leave you with a lifetime of struggle and difficulty.

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