

Why one should not marry outside the Church – Asaolu O.S.

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Introduction: We recall that Marriage is the union of a man and a woman in a divinely-covenanted relationship as husband and wife unto each other till death do them part. Marriage is for companionship, sexual satisfaction and procreation. The church is the assembly of Christ's disciples indeed or Christians; baptized believers who worship God in spirit and in truth through Jesus our Lord. To marry "*outside the church*" is to be joined together in wedlock or matrimony with a non-Christian.

Marriage is the oldest institution; it predates the church but typifies it (Ephesians 5:22-32). God witnesses and seals such union between two eligible persons. At the first marriage, Adam was given a bride by His Maker. After the fall in Eden, Adam indirectly blamed God via his statement; "*the woman whom thou hast given me, she gave me and I did eat.*" Since then, God has allowed every other man to SEEK and MARRY his own choice! Wise men seek God's face in prayer and follow principles in His word to make a search and selection. Hence, we have:

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD (Proverbs 18:22). Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life (Proverbs 31:10-12).

In the Old Covenant, Israelites were commanded not to marry neighbouring pagans in order to preserve their genealogical purity and not be enticed to worship false gods. The way of the transgressors is hard (Proverbs 13:15) as the Jews found out in Ezra 9-10. Marriage is in itself a bit of a distraction in spiritual service relative to when one is single (1 Corinthians 7:32-35), such distraction ought to be MINIMIZED, and made easier to navigate by marrying a fellow-believer, not compounded by marrying outside the faith or church.

Marrying outside the faith poses risks such as:

a) Possibility of influencing or discouraging the weak-in-faith on what is best. It dampens the joy and enthusiasm that marriage should elicit amongst brethren (since many doubt such conforms with Philippians 4:8). It is somehow similar to eating something sacrificed or dedicated to an idol!

1 Corinthians 10:23-31 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

b) Possibility of desertion in future due to religious incompatibility and contrasting life-outlook when one is committed but the other detests it or is worldly.

1 Corinthians 7:15-16 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

c) Possibility of weakening one's faithful practice or even backsliding or renouncing the faith.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

With a fellow Christian as spouse, one is MORE LIKELY to have:

a) Mutual understanding, it will foster mutual encouragement and contributory effort to attain desired goals!

Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Not only will your spiritual work align with mutual support (Philemon 1:1-2) even your professional efforts will receive partner input or prayer (1 Corinthians 12:1-3,18-19). Such can evangelize together outside the home instead of either hoping, praying and fasting for the partner to be converted. Raising children together and teaching them the way of the Lord would be straightforward, not complicated (Proverbs 22:6, Colossians 3:20). Running the home, dealing with neighbours, etc. becomes less-difficult due to similar beliefs shaping orientations.

b) Mutual Encouragement Will Be Fostered

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

c) A chance to be a recognized leader in the assembly of the saints especially as an ordained worker.

As one gets OLDER and closer to the grave, s/he typically gets closer to God, regrets the follies of youth, want to serve God more if the energy is still there and hope to be a better example unto others. A good avenue for such service at that period is in the church as most would have spent their younger and really active periods running around in various cities chasing career, wealth, pleasure, honours, etc. We don't have to wait till we are aged to serve God! It is easier to do so in the church when one advances in age if s/he is married to a Christian. Only such are to be entrusted with spiritual responsibilities of taking care of souls and serving as models unto the flock of Christ - Titus 1-2. Any man who desires or may someday desire the office of a Bishop or Deacon would have to be married to a mature Christian, by the time his suitability to the post is considered -1 Tim 3.

Conclusion: Although one can, to circumvent avoidable stress, pains and risks, as much as it lies in one – it is **expedient** that one should NOT marry outside the faith. Otherwise, there will be several situations where you either marginalize the LORD or your partner, due to not being fully in synch in the three-fold-relationship. There will be many compromises wherein both couple will be unfulfilled since s/he cannot share certain moments or issues with the partner; their oneness will be limited. Sadly, many of such marriages are tolerated if not dissolved over time whereas a marriage is meant to be enjoyed, not endured. Given the facts stated in Acts 2:41-44; 5:10-14, it is reasonable to hold the view that inter-faith marriages in the early-church would be more of cases where one out of a couple is first converted than for Christians to woo and wed an unbeliever. Even if the latter arose, we are more knowledgeable today. More is expected of us as those unto whom much is give. Truly, we can see clearly through the word now compared to those who saw in part as through a dark glass.

If as a single, widow or widower in need of a spouse with wonderful attributes? The charge remains: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matthew 6:33).

Note: One need not misuse 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 on this subject, [see related article](#). Likewise, 1 Corinthians 7:39 addresses the liberty of the widow in the Lord to be married unto whomsoever she will. This contrasts with the restrictions under the Old Covenant on marrying only from the deceased's kindred or from the priesthood, etc. Nevertheless, we are instructed NOT to use our liberty in Christ as an occasion for the flesh (Gal 2:4; 5:1-4,13).

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