

# Can Christians marry someone who is not a Christian?

## Leader's Notes

### Context

This study was prepared in response to a question asked by one of the students in a seeker Bible Study group. The group had mostly seekers from China and I did this study after we had finished the introductory course.

### Introductions

Name, what's the best thing you did in the last week?

### Review

What did we study last week, what did we learn?

Anyone do the homework? Any questions?

### Starter

Have you ever done a group project or played in a team that has not worked well together?

(Think of an example to share from your own experience.)

Think about –

1) If you were an Olympic athlete, wanted to compete in say, the 110m hurdles, what would you do to help yourself? Train hard, run lots, consider food intake, etc.

What would you not do? Party until late every night, eat lots of fatty foods,

Why? Because this wouldn't help you to achieve what you want to achieve.

Is this a rule? Or a guideline? Or just a good idea if you want to achieve success in the Olympics?

Today, I'm responding to the question – 'Can a Christian go out with or marry a non-Christian?'

This is a difficult question. If you think of our bible studies as intermediate – well this is an advanced level question, but you asked it so I'll answer it.

Think about yourself and your friends from home, think about what are the 3 most important things in your lives. Write them down, for example, family, work, money, success, write down what you think you and your friends most important 3 things are with 1 the most important.

Ask them to explain a little about each one, listen, validate, confirm what they think as important, don't be critical, seek to understand, you asked the question, you can't just tell them that they're all wrong.

Thank you for explaining that. I am really interested to see what is important to you, it helps me to understand you all better.

Now, I'd like you to think for a moment, if someone is a Christian, what do you think would be the most important things in their lives? What would the order be do you think of 1, 2, 3?

My example:

1. God
2. My wife
3. Work

NB) it is probably interesting to note that while God is first for all Christians and therefore this is a truth that permeates across all cultures, what comes as 2 or 3 will be heavily culturally influenced and it's good to explain this. (However Biblically I do believe that your spouse should come before your parents which is a huge, huge thing for East Asians to accept as it goes so much against their culture – this is a whole study in itself and may be best just to ignore this at this point.)

What did we learn from the story of the Rich Young Ruler? (Luke 18:18-30)

Point No.1 God comes first for Christians – name the areas of life where God comes first for Christians?

Money, work, life, keep going until someone says – 'everything'.

Summary: So there is a big difference between the priorities in a Christian's life and a non-Christian's life.

What is a partnership like if people do not agree?

For example – 2 people agree to go on a walk together, but they can't agree where to go- what will happen?

Think of areas of life where you have to agree to have a successful partnership

- Imagine you wanted to set up a business with a business partner. Your personal aim is to make money. However the aim of your business partner is to be popular, therefore he starts giving things away rather than selling them. You are patient to start with but after a while you realise he sells very little and gives most of it away – are you two going to be good business partners?

Why not? Because you don't have the same goals.

- Think of a football team. Are you there to win or to play with flair, where it doesn't matter if you lose as long as you entertain?

In a marriage what sorts of things do you have to agree together?

How use your:

Money

Time

Where you live...

Marriage is a union - Matthew 19:4-6

How might a Christian and non-Christian's attitude towards the following be different?

	<b>Christian</b>	<b>Not a Christian</b>
Sunday	Go to church	See family
Children	Want them to be brought up loving Jesus, praying, having Christian values	Want them to be brought up in other ways
Job	Happy to accept a lower paid job to have time for family and people in church	Want spouse to have the best, highest paid job
Guidance in life	Look to God and then to others	Look to parents, self, friends...

What will be the outcome of a marriage like this?

Conflict and not a happy marriage.

To make it a happy marriage one of the people has got to turn to the other's ways.

Which do you think could happen?

### **Practically**

Why do you think the differences between a Christian and non-Christian are more important than the difference between 'he likes football and she likes swimming?'

Quotes from women who became Christians after their marriage and were married to non-Christian husbands. From *'Just Good Friends; by Joyce Huggett.*

'But why should a Christian want to marry a non-Christian? There are so many disadvantages, so many headaches, so many problems'.

'My problem is that my husband feels threatened by my faith. Oh! I don't mean that he stops me praying or reading the Bible, or even going to Young Wives or Church once on Sundays. But he doesn't want me getting involved. He actually says that. 'Don't get involved'. But I want to be involved in the Lord's work.'

**So what does God say?**

Deuteronomy 7:1, 3-4

1 Kings 11: 1-6

2 Corinthians 6: 14-16

1 Corinthians 7:39

Does this sound crazy and very difficult to do?

In Genesis (24: 1-4 and 28: 1) Abraham and Isaac command their sons to get a wife from amongst their own people – ie: the people of God.

In the book of Joshua (23: 1-2, 6, 12-13) there is a warning that if the person you marry isn't part of the people of God then they will become a snare and a trap to you.

Both Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9: 1-15 and Nehemiah 13: 25-27) were horrified that the Jews had been marrying people from other tribes, ie those who had other gods rather than the Lord.

The 'foreign' aspect was only important because they had 'foreign' gods. A Christian can marry any other Christian from any nationality. I know many such cross-cultural Christian marriages – even though these couples also need to work out their (cultural) differences, they can do it because they have a common goal (to please God), a common authority, the Bible, and a common helper, God's holy spirit.

This is a very big topic and complex one with a number of different situations we haven't had time to discuss today. There may be things that you are concerned or worried about that you weren't able to talk about today. If that's the case then I am happy to listen to you and talk things over, I am here to help. If you'd like to chat I'd be happy to meet up with you for a coffee and a chat.

We have only started to discuss the very beginnings of it – please do ask me questions.

*(Handout for students below.)*

## Bible Study

# Can Christians marry someone who is not a Christian?

### Review

### Starter

Have you ever done a group project or played in a team that has not worked well together?

- 1) What are the 3 most important things in your life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What do you think are the most important things in a Christian's life? (Remember the story of the rich young ruler in Luke 10:18-30.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What is a partnership like if people do not agree?

Think of an example where people have to agree to have a successful partnership.

- 4) In a marriage what sorts of things do you have to agree together?

How might a Christian and someone who is not a Christian's attitude towards the following be different?

**Christian**

**Not a Christian**

Sunday

Children

Job

Guidance in life

What will be the outcome of a marriage between a Christian and someone who is not a Christian be?

Why do you think the differences between a Christian and non-Christian are more important than the difference between 'he likes football and she likes swimming?'

### **So what does God say in the Bible about this topic?**

#### **Deuteronomy 7:1, 3-4**

What does the text say?

What reasons for not intermarrying does it give?

#### **1 Kings 11: 1-6**

What did Solomon do that God told them not to do?

#### **2 Corinthians 6: 14-16**

#### **1 Corinthians 7:39**

### **Other examples in the Bible**

Abraham and Isaac

Joshua

Ezra and Nehemiah

### **What about marrying people from other countries or cultures?**

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