

# MIXED MARRIAGES

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“Never marry but for love; but see that thou loves what is lovely”. W.Penn

“Mothers, who force their daughters into interested marriage are worse than the Ammonites, who sacrificed their children to Molech, - the latter undergoing a speedy death; the former suffering years of torture, but too frequently leading to the same result.” Rochester

“As the Lord commanded that an ox and an ass should not be yoked together, because the match is unequal; even so it is an unlawful thing for the faithful to marry with infidels or to have anything to do with them.” Cawdray

“And I will make thee swear by the Lord...that thou shalt not a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites.... Genesis 24:3

## MIXED MARRIAGES – A BROAD CONCEPT!

In general a marriage may be said to be “mixed” when there are differences of race, social background or religious creed between the parties involved. Our present interest is limited to the religious differences in mixed marriages because these differences create a most serious problem in our youth, their parents and the church.

## LIMITING THE PROBLEM!

Religious differences in marriage stem from three kinds of relationships. There is first of all, the marriage of a child of God to an unbeliever. The real problem here must be found in the fact that such marriage is contracted indirect conflict with the Word of God. Already in the Old Testament marriage with the heathen nations were strictly forbidden. (Deuteronomy 7:3) In the New Testament the exhortation “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” is certainly applicable to marriage and the fact that under the above circumstances it is impossible to “marry in the Lord” (1Corinthians 7: 39 ) ought to be clearly understood by all. The solution then to the problems arising out of such marriage unions is not to be found in an attempt to patch up what is basically evil. This malady is incurable. What is needed in such cases is an extra large dosage of preventive medicine.

In the second place, we speak of the marriage of a Protestant and a Roman Catholic, as mixed. Such it is. Religious tensions are inevitable in such a union because the differences of faith are very great and of fundamental importance. Compromising positions are not solution in these cases for the Roman Catholic Church allows no compromise. Their position is that “the marriage must be solemnized by a priest and the Protestant must sign an ante nuptial agreement permitting his or her children to be educated in the Catholic faith, giving the Catholic partner free exercise of religion, and abiding by the Roman Catholic regulations with respect to birth control.” If Protestants would maintain as firm a position, there would be no problem because such intermarriage would be virtually impossible. Certainly no Protestant Reformed youth may

submit to the above described conditions of marriage. To do so is to sin against God, the church and one's own conscience.

More serious, however, and of immediate concern in this connection, are those difficulties that stem from inter-faith and inter-denominational marriages among Protestants of different kind. The tendency here is to be generalize the religious differences that exist and to minimize their importance. As a result of this these differences are not seriously considered before marriage. The fantasy that these difficulties will immediately dissipate after marriage only leaves the parties involved in the throes of a perpetual conflict that offers no simple solution. Construction is begun on a home that is foolishly being erected on a divided foundation. Misery and heartache fill the day. Tears are shed to no avail for these cannot wash away the deep rooted differences that exist here. Children are born of these marriages and the situation grows increasingly worse. It seems that the only practiced solution is that one party "gives in". If young people only realized what all is involved in such marriages, they would undoubtedly heed the "stop, look and listen" before plunging headlong into this state. The avoidance or prevention of these unhappy situations is our immediate concern.

## A REAL PROBLEM

We do not mean to shrug off or to minimize the real problem here. On the one hand it is simply a fact that for many of our young people marriage is made virtually impossible unless they marry outside of their own church. On the other hand, it is also indisputable that some marriages of persons within the same church end in anything except true happiness while in other cases one may marry another outside of their church with real success. In this light we would be guilty of oversimplifying this problem of youth if we advocated the ban of all inter-denominational marriages. This cannot be done. Rather we must face the problem realistically and offer a few suggestions that many help prevent some of the more unpleasant consequences of these "mixed marriages".

## CONCLUDING SUGGESTIONS!

We believe that, firstly, parents will have to assume a more direct responsibility in this regard. We do not mean we must turn back history's page to the time when parents selected mates for their children, but we do mean that parents must be alerted to their responsibility to see to it that their children attain spiritual maturity by that time they begin to evidence marital interests. This is fundamentally important. A young man must be guided by spiritual considerations in the selection of his mate and if, therefore, his spiritual development is neglected throughout his early life, he will reach the years of adolescence without that essential qualification and proceed to look for a mate while being guided only by physical and other secondary considerations. Likewise a young who lacks spiritual maturity is easily carried away by the "wrong man". Preparation for marriage must begin long before the date and plans for the wedding are set. In this preparation parents must plan a vital role.

We believe, too, that young people especially must be made to understand that matters of faith and confession are more important than marriage. The latter must serve the former. Marriage ultimately has its purpose in God. That is why marriage must always be "in the Lord" and "for God's sake". If this is kept in mind. It will be clear that we may never forsake the truth for sake of marriage. A perpetual state of spiritual adultery and apostasy from God is not

justified by the establishing of an earthly marriage state that conforms only to external requirements set up by man. The Lord's blessing will not rest there. If marriage is a threat to your faith, it is better you did not marry. It is better to enjoy the Lord's blessing in the unmarried state than to taste His displeasure while you live in a state of marriage that is contrary to His revealed will.

Finally then, this means that where the possibility of these mixed marriages exists, the parties concerned must face and resolve these problems before marriage. It is not simply a question of who is going to give in or of the one going along to the other's church for the sake of getting a husband or wife or to maintain fully, peace after the marriage. Those are practical considerations but they do not touch the heart of the problem. Settle the differences before marriage because it is really a matter of doctrine and life and this is much deeper than church membership. It involves the question whether two people are really able to live together in the covenant of marriage. To do so there must be an inner, deeper, essential, spiritual agreement or unity out of which love flows upon that love along marriage can be based. Only when you and your wife or husband love the same God, the same truth, the same Christ, can you build a future together upon a foundation that will stand. Then you will love the same church that preaches and maintains the doctrines of your faith, and your problem of "mixed" marriage will be resolved.

Originally Published in:  
Vol 20 No.4 May 1960