

**It takes a great deal of courage to give voice to your questions. I feel the grief, pain, and heartache expressed in your questions. I can't say strongly enough ... YOU ARE NOT ALONE! What follows is my attempt to answer these questions without research, from my heart, in as few words as possible. I welcome your follow-up thoughts.**

**Blessings!**

**Jeff Porte**

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**1. How can I help my spouse listen rather than lecture?**

Be assertive and explain how lecturing is not helpful to you. Come up with a mutually agreeable "sign" which you can offer when your spouse crosses the line into lecture.

**2. What does the Bible say about dating after divorce?**

Technically, the Bible does not address dating after divorce. Many today have misread this particular passage to make two statements: (1) One cannot divorce his wife unless she has been unfaithful; (2) Whoever remarries commits adultery. But this is not the meaning. The active verb here is "commits adultery," and the entire sentence must be held together. It should be read, "Whoever does the following commits adultery: divorces his wife (except for immorality) and remarries another." Judgment is being placed not on someone remarrying but on someone remarrying after pursuing an illegitimate divorce. If the divorce is invalid, so is the remarriage. But the reverse is also true; if the divorce is valid, then remarriage must be acceptable, just as it was in commonplace Jewish custom.

A third important passage is found in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul discusses Christian marriage. He echoes the teaching of Jesus, saying that husbands and wives are not permitted to leave each other but should work toward reconciliation.

**3. A couple of weeks ago, you talked about being unequally yoked. In light of submission, how would you address a couple that is married already, but "unequally yoked"?**

A couple that is unequally yoked is addressed in 1 Corinthians 7. Paul affirms that Christians should not initiate a divorce because of the spouse's deficiencies (verse 12). The presence of a Jesus-follower in the marriage brings the hope of salvation to the children and family.

**4. The first question you received is our question, too. Our daughter who came out to us a few years ago will most likely be marrying her partner in the next year. We love her and she says she is a Christian. We want to continue our relationship with her and are seeking God's guidance in all this. (We are so grateful for the LGBT support group here.)**

To attend a gay marriage ceremony for a child does not necessarily suggest you support gay marriage. Your attendance DOES communicate that you support your child in spite of their less-than best choices.

**5. What can I do to be an active, loving listener to family members who share things with me when you feel they are just wrong and you feel strongly they are making a choice that is unhealthy without burning a bridge or being shut out since generally, based on my past experiences with them, they get defensive and angry when I do so?**

If a family member shares with you things you feel are wrong, you may want to ask them the question, "Do you want me to speak into this issue?" If they decline, then you must refrain from sharing. If they agree to letting you give voice to your opinion, then do so with great care in the words you choose.

6. **As an adult with your own family, what does it mean to honor your parents? Is there a place to offer insights or advice when you see parenting decisions being made for younger siblings that you may see as potentially harmful or leading to further problems?**

**Honoring your parents means many things:**

- To speak highly of them with others
- To consider their counsel
- To ensure that their care is provided for in their senior years
- Create margin in your schedule to spend time with them

7. **Advice?**

I would not offer parenting advice to anyone without first asking for permission; asking a question like, "I'm curious if you might be open to some insights I have learned in my far-less than perfect parenting experience?"

8. **Our son recently moved in with his wonderful girlfriend and all the family, but myself (Mom), is "okay" with it. So, I pray and look for opportunities to speak truth in love. My heart is still broken.**

Speak the truth in love one time. Assure your son that your love is not dependent upon his choices. Pray a lot!

9. **What do you do with a family member that is toxic to the family's health?**

I don't think I can answer this with any effectiveness without more information.

10. **I'm travelling with my sisters and mom on vacation. How do I keep my sanity?**

Consider medication ☺ ... just kidding. In preparing for the vacation, you may consider mentioning how a restful vacation means that you have to seek some "solo" time every day.

11. **What does wife-submission look like in a practical sense? Financial decisions? Child-rearing decisions? Spiritual decisions? What if the wife is more spiritually mature than the husband?**

I operate from a mutual submission mindset on all issues until there is a crossroad decision. In mutually submitting, I am choosing to so trust my wife's judgment, that I am submitting my authority to her judgment and wisdom.

A crossroad decision as I see it, would be defined that there is a decision that cannot be made through compromise. Our experience is that has happened only one time in 34 years.

12. **Back to the baseball analogy: how are wives not in a place where they can see the whole field?**

I do not disagree that a wife "sees the whole field." That is one of the liabilities of any analogy. Communication of what your hopes and dreams are for your relationship may prove to be a wise strategy toward having a vision for your relationship well beyond the day-to-day management, where wives submitting to their husbands is realized.

13. **Please elaborate on your comment of not dating too soon.**

Statistically, the latter a child begins dating the less likely they are to contract STD's, engage in premarital sex, and have out-of-wedlock children. Further, the first dating experiences of a child ought to be group dates rather than one-on-one dates.

14. **Wives submit to husbands. Does that mean what the husband says goes? I assume mutually respecting each other has a place as well. What's the fine line between being submissive but also being respected and heard, especially when you don't agree with something that the husband says or wants to do?**

Wife submission DOES NOT mean that whatever the husband says goes. A good leader of a family understands that love and respect flow best when mutual submission is the norm.

15. **What are two or three ways to witness to unbelieving family members?**

- a. Pray daily. Terri's oldest sister came back to Christ in her late 50's, after bailing on church following a bad experience in college.
- b. Take a family member out to breakfast/lunch and ask them to share their journey of why they don't believe. Just listen and learn.
- c. See step (a).

- 16. I divorced my wife ten years ago and remarried five years ago. My second marriage hasn't been going well and I realized I'm still in love with my first wife. We (first wife and I) have been sleeping together again. Does God view this as adultery? How does the one flesh union, the irrevocable covenant of marriage, work in light of a divorce? Can man undo what God has done?**  
See Question #2
- 17. My brother, who is a practicing member of the LGBT community, has invited us to his wedding. Should I go? Would that be condoning the lifestyle?**  
See Question #4
- 18. We have a grandchild who we were told by her parents, that they choose the gay life ... we are overwhelmed. I am fearful that we will lose our grandchild to the kingdom. I have been prayer; my heart is broken. God is good – I want this to go away.**  
I couldn't recommend more highly to take advantage of our support group for parents of gay children, led by Allen and Sharon Tans. (Contact the church office 375.4815 for more information.)  
Several books on this subject which I recommend are:
- a. Out of a Far Country ... Christopher Yuan & Angela Yuan*
  - b. Straight & Narrow? ... Thomas E. Schmidt*
  - c. Compassion Without Compromise ... Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau*
- 19. My daughter is gay and doesn't feel accepted at our church.**  
Have her try attending The River. They hold the traditional view of homosexuality as we do, but have had better traction than Centerpoint in creating an environment of "belonging."
- 20. I'm a teen and my Mom and her boyfriend are always fighting. It's really tough to deal with for me and my siblings. How should I pray about this?**  
I think I would pray that they break-up. Lots of fighting in courtship is a predictor of trouble in marriage.
- 21. My Mom does parenting way differently than my Dad does. How can I explain to them what is going on with my day or a situation when I know my parents will start helping me, but in the end, it's like someone placed a bomb in the house? My Dad will start getting very angry and it scares me. I don't know how to tell my Dad I cannot always talk to him about things, because of that. How can I explain it?**  
Challenging to answer without more information. I believe you should tell your Dad how his reactions to your conversations are both scary and inappropriate. If he elects not to change, then you would be wise to greatly limit the things you share.
- 22. My wife is due with our first child in four months. We both already lead pretty busy lifestyles and I know when the baby comes it will add another element of stress and busyness to our lives. The prospect of raising a child and being the first example to him of Christ's love is weighty and intimidating, but coupling that with caring and loving my wife in the way she deserves seems almost an impossible task. How have all of you balanced raising and training children in God's will, and loving and caring for your wives?**  
We have not balanced work/family perfectly. Ask God daily, for help. Consider approaching someone who you think has done a great job, and ask him to mentor you. Never forget, you love your kids best by loving your wife well. Prioritize your marriage. First things first!
- 23. My husband won't come to church or talk with me about spiritual matters. Does my faith cover him from damnation? What can I do to promote his growth and attendance?**  
1 Corinthians 7:13-14 speaks to this issue. Paul appears to suggest that the believer's faith covers the unbelieving spouse. This text ought to be kept in tension with LOTS of passages which state that each person is accountable to God for what they do in receiving or rejecting Jesus.
- 24. I have a teenage son that I've been wanting to come to church with me and come to know and love God. He gives me a hard time and wants to stay home. So how can I get him to come with me? Can I pray for him to come unto God?**  
Pray more than you plead. Keep relaying how much positive impact services are having on you. Consider having him invite a friend to come with you. Rewards will work far better than punishments for a teenager and church.

**25. How does one gain patience and trust in all relationships and rid of anger when you have been betrayed and lied to in past relationships?**

As a rule, trust erodes fast and is built slow. People earn back trust one good decision at a time.

**26. Should an 18-year old high school student be given freedom to make their own decisions, even though they have shown inability to do so wisely in the past?**

It all depends on the decision. Freedom in issues of little consequences is your best playa toward eventual freedom in all decisions.

**27. My brother has fallen away from the Lord and sadly has no intention of coming back. What are some active, loving ways that we, as his family, can disciple him with and lead him back into the Lord's loving arms?**

Honestly, pleading with God is far more effective than pleading with your brother. Pray for God to bring a Jesus-following friend into your brother's life. Never, never, never give up praying!

**28. What does the Bible say about cohabitation?**

According to the Barna Group, 37% of cohabitators are Christians. The truth is ... you can't practice marriage. Marriage works BECAUSE it is permanent. 1 Corinthians 6:18 and 1 Corinthians 7:1-2 are the texts most germane to the issue. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 ... "Have no appearance of evil." is another text which speaks to this subject.

**29. If a female is single and the head of her household, does she have the same authority and voice in the church as a man?**

Yes!

**30. My son was baptized as an infant, but has walked away from the faith and renounced Christ. How should I respond to him?**

Pray, pray, and pray. Ask God to bring a Christian friend into his life.