



# When Spouses Have Different Beliefs

By Donna Erickson Couch

After the romantic dust of my marriage settled, fundamental life questions surfaced when my closest friend died in a car accident. As I grieved, my husband, Dana, comforted me as best he could. When I talked, however, about my need for God and church (I had drifted away from Catholicism), he was silent. Eventually he told me that, while he didn't mind if I wanted religion again, he wouldn't participate.

Ten years into our marriage, I not only forged my way back to my faith alone, but embarked on a life-changing spiritual quest. Through years of confusion, I prayed and suffered in silence as I tried to reconcile my love for God *and* for my nonparticipating husband. I worried about my role in Dana's salvation and agonized over how to raise our children in the faith alone.

Years passed until I finally made peace with my anxieties. I eventually received four transformative insights:

## 1. After a few years married, it's common to experience a spiritual awakening.

Upon completion of confirmation class or during college, many drift away from their faith. When thoughts turn to marriage, faith is frequently downplayed. We may accept the naïve presumption that "love is all you need."

Later, perhaps after a child or two, it's common to experience a need for church again. Frequently, those who return are surprised to discover a treasury of meaning in their renewed faith. Along with the elation, however, may linger thoughts about the negative effects this may have on a marriage.

## 2. Authentic spirituality isn't divisive.

As my inner life grew, I felt an increasing distance between Dana and me. When I tried to describe my feelings to a friend, he quoted Jesus: "I have come to bring not peace but the sword...and one's enemies will be those of his household" (Matthew 10:34–36).

Though discouraged, with the help of prayer and a spiritual director, I found deeper meaning in this biblical passage. I learned that, even though our incompatible religious beliefs could feel insurmountable, time quells the fear. Like marriage, when we commit to God for the long haul, it's natural to sometimes experience tension.

## 3. The inner journey is a solitary one.

In another Scripture passage, Jesus says there is no marriage in heaven (Mark 12:25). If we look at this as a blueprint for our spiritual journey, an important insight is revealed: While there are many companions on the outer journey, no one can walk the inner path with us. While we can try to describe our personal

relationships with God, no one—not even our spouse—may share those experiences completely. God calls each of us into a mystical marriage, demanding that we forsake all others.

## 4. All relationships mirror the divine relationship.

All relationships teach us about God. Can we observe the divine in everyone? Equipped with a bigger vision, we welcome the challenges of living with those who, without words, can teach us about the subtleties of God's presence. Meanwhile, spiritual directors and friends can help us process our complex relationship with God. Frequently, others serve this need better than those with whom we live.

If you're experiencing a spiritual awakening while married to someone on a different page, take heart. The challenge of living a God-centered life provides an opportunity to repeatedly experience what it means to fall in love—with your spouse, your faith, and the Lord. When God means something different to your spouse, it's not the end of the world but rather the beginning of a profound encounter with love's sacred mysteries. +

## PRAYER

Lord, you reveal to us the will of God. Help me to know and live out the will of God in my life.


From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,  
Rev. Warren J. Savage  
and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

June 11-16, 2018

Monday, St. Barnabas:  
Acts 11:21b–26; 13:1–3 / Mt 5:1–12  
Tuesday, Weekday:  
1 Kgs 17:7–16 / Mt 5:13–16  
Wednesday, St. Anthony of Padua:  
1 Kgs 18:20–39 / Mt 5:17–19

Thursday, Weekday:  
1 Kgs 18:41–46 / Mt 5:20–26  
Friday, Weekday:  
1 Kgs 19:9a, 11–16 / Mt 5:27–32  
Saturday, Weekday:  
1 Kgs 19:19–21 / Mt 5:33–37

Bringing Home  
the Word   
June 10, 2018

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# Bringing Home the Word

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time | June 17, 2018

## God Is Our GPS

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I have a good sense of direction. If I drive by a place, I can usually find my way back, walking or driving as much by instinct that says, “I think it’s over that way a little,” as by any street names or landmarks. I like following unknown paths in the woods just to see where they lead. I almost always find my way back with a minimum of backtracking.

This bothers my husband, who is a firm believer in maps, map apps, and GPS voices telling him when to turn. Often he ignores them to take a different route,

but he is comforted by their presence and reliably gets from point A to point B.

“We walk by faith, not by sight,” St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:7. He may not have had a store in mind, but in a very real way he was talking about getting from point A to point B—from our wandering in this world to our home with God. He was talking about making it out of our spiritual woods into the light of day and making discoveries along the way.

We see as human beings do and not as God does. Paul suggests we find our way through our faith in God, who is light in our darkness, the path on which we walk, our goal and destination.

Our longing to know where we are going is satisfied when we realize we are going to him. Some will take detours and get utterly lost. Others will rely on maps, and still others will follow those who have gone before—the saints who are our examples or Christ himself. Walking by faith isn’t easy, but God will get us to where we are going if we trust in him. +

## Sunday Readings

### Ezekiel 17:22–24

Every tree of the field will know that I am the LORD. I...wither up the green tree, and make the dry tree bloom.

### 2 Corinthians 5:6–10

We would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord.

### Mark 4:26–34

[Jesus said,] “But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches.”

*We need to find our way through faith in God.*

## A Word From Pope Francis

Evangelization does not consist in proselytizing, for proselytizing is a caricature of evangelization, but rather evangelizing entails attracting by our witness those who are far off. It means humbly drawing near to those who feel distant from God in the Church, drawing near to those who feel judged and condemned.

—Homily at Mass for the Evangelization of Peoples, July 7, 2015



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Do I let the force of my faith multiply into acts of love and service?
- Do I trust in God to lead me in my life to him?