

Living With An Unconverted Mate

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By Joseph F. Dumond

August 26, 2006

In May 2003 a United Church of God member asked about literature concerning spouses that are not in the church. Joe Dumond's spouse is not a church member, and never has been, and many a time is very antagonistic towards the church. I have been baptized since 1983, and started to attend World Wide Church of God in 1982. We were married in Oct. 1978.

I thought that the lessons I have learned over the years would be of help to those who are now dealing with this challenge. My relationship will be different and many unconverted mate marriages are unique unto themselves. I hope that you who have this opportunity to learn can glean some thing from my past lessons that can help you.

It has been said that only one who has already lost a mate can understand the pain of another who has been recently widowed. Or only an alcoholic can understand the struggle of someone caught up in the addiction. Unless you are in that boat or have been there, it is not easy for you or someone outside to understand all the emotions anxiety and fears that are going on inside the person dealing with the problem. So it is with someone who has an unconverted mate. You may be able to empathize and listen but you cannot fully understand the dilemma.

So I am going to explain my story in order that others may see and learn and be able to apply different things to their own relationships. As the questioner states the church has no literature on this topic. This is my story.

Joe Dumond

I was working away from home in construction and came home once or twice a month. While away one time I heard Mr. Armstrong on the radio, late one night and he tweaked my interest. Twice that same week I heard him again right after work and he angered me somehow insulting my intelligence. I ordered the booklets and was going to prove him wrong. Shortly after this I was laid off for the winter as was normal and started to read day and night locking myself in the spare room and not coming out for days.

Once in a while I would rush out and tell my wife to look at what I had just learned. I got the look, like who cares. She was busy with our second child who had just arrived one year after the first. She was busy taking care of them while I hunkered down to read. This did not go over well.

At the end of winter I had finally admitted I was wrong concerning all that Mr. Armstrong had said, and started to keep the Sabbath, by locking the door and not going out of the room. This too was not good as my wife needed help with the babies and I wasn't going to work on the Sabbath. I soon started to attend in Toronto in the spring of 1982. Six weeks later I landed a job in Quebec and was gone. My wife was pleased, as that religion too, was gone . But while I

was away I was attending Church and learning and getting excited. This was great stuff. I would come home once a month for the weekend. Arriving home around supper Fri. night and resting for the Sabbath and then went to services on Saturday. Saturday night I spent with the family as well as Sunday and would leave to go back to Quebec Sunday late afternoon. And so it was all summer and fall up until Dec. 24th. For three years.

That first year in the church I had learned about Christmas and couldn't believe how duped I was. I told my wife we no longer were going to keep Christmas, and she protested. I arrived home Christmas eve late and we argued on Christmas day and I threw out the tree with all the dressings still on it on boxing day. I was after all the head of the family and the man of our house. I was in charge! So for the next month I slept on the couch and fed myself and was ignored totally because I was in charge. But I was not yet done. I figured all I had to do was convert my wife and all would be normal again. So for the rest of that winter I tried to convert her. And then I was baptized just before Passover. Now I was really a Christian.

I am telling you all this not for my glory but to my shame. In my calling I was trying to call every one that was dear to me so we all could be saved together. Basically so I wouldn't have to do this Christian thing by myself. But the more I tried to convert my wife and extended family members the more alienated I became. And that also meant that my wife was being alienated too because of me. Soon we had very few friends and relatives that would visit.

So I would develop friends in the Church. And as I introduced them to my wife they would at some time try to convert her. Asking why she was being so pagan keeping Christmas and why she can't see the truth.

I found this funny at first hoping someone would crack her. But it was years before I learned my lesson.

The two things my wife hates to hear the most are pagan beliefs and the wife submitting to the husband. I have and many of the church brethren have worn her out with these two expressions.

Surprisingly my wife and I are still married and we'll be Celebrating our 25th Anniversary this Feast in 2003. She has agreed to come to the feasts every year I have gone but one. I do not object to her beliefs anymore, and we agree to disagree. I now defend her from zealous church members. I no longer force her to come to services and I don't preach to her about things at all. She once in a while reads the Good news to see what I am up to, and then asks some questions until I open my mouth to answer. So, we after 20 year now have some peace in our relationship. My wife had to learn to be a wife as all Brides do but mine also had to learn to do this with a husband who was away half the time and a religious fanatic that was different from all the religions known, and yet she stuck it out.

Paul says that if the spouse is willing to stay with the Christian then let them stay. And if they wish to depart let them go. And also why should you be unequally yoked. These things were said to me when my wife and I were considering divorce. But Moses said God allowed divorce

because of our stiff necks. My wife even said I would be happier if I married so and so and that one there, as long as they were in the church... and I was beginning to believe her.

But the whole point to all this suffering that I have learned is that it was brought on by me alone. No one else. Not my wife just me. Because in all the things I was learning I was not allowing her time to learn. The more I forced her to do things the harder her heart was against God. The more brethren that gave her that little shot or pagan dig the harder her heart became. The more religious, people were in front of her, the more disgusted she grew. It took me about ten years to learn that the light that shines on the hill doesn't make a noise. Not a peep. And yet I was called to be that light. A light that makes noise is generally one that is about to go out!

And that's another thing. I was the one called. God knew I needed the work done to me the most so he called me first. My wife, I see now is already a Saint. She must be for putting up with me all these years. When God wants her to come he will call her and she will come. But what if I forced her to come and she went through all the motions then after a time rejected God. That would be worse than anything. So I leave it to God to decide when it is best for her to be called.

Another thing I was always concerned about was the time when we would be leaving for the place of safety. What about my family who are not in the church. Christ has said that they who are not willing to leave spouse, parents or family weren't worthy of him. But that would be very hard. Then recently I was told that Noah was the one called but God allowed him to take his whole family on the ark, even though they were not all righteous. And at Jericho, Rahab was told to have her whole family in the room in order to save them. And Lot too was allowed to save his family even though some did not go and his wife even turned back. So I believe God will allow our family the opportunity to flee too if they choose to do so.

I wanted to be like other church families so bad. It saddened me. Then after many years I realized how special my situation was but could not figure out why until recently. Love. Real love is the thing that God is trying to form in all of us. Some he works with one way and others another. But Us (with an unconverted Mate), he has to call one to teach them real love. You have to love them when you are ridiculed and made fun of. I have to love my wife when she hates me and wishes me dead because of my beliefs. You have to love them when you feel all alone in your beliefs. And you have to help others so you don't think only of yourself. Yes it is hard at times and easy to feel woe is me. To have your own pity party. But you are learning things that married couples in the church and singles in the church will never know or completely understand. That is how to really love your mate when they all but hate you for being so different. This can only be taught by experiencing it firsthand. It is a strange position. Yet a unique one.

Congratulations on the good fortune that God is about to show you if you allow Him too. It will be challenge.

In 2006 My wife and I are still married. We have had our problems and struggles even very recently. Prayer and Love and a forgetful memory help (forgetting past fight). I love my wife. And even though we have had so many bad arguments and said so many hurtful things, to each other. The thing I remember most is that after each argument and some time to let things heal, there is always the make love. If you walk out, you'll miss out on the make love. May our Father Yahweh help you to learn to love even when you are hated by those closest to you.

Shalom