

1 Corinthians 7:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not,
and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

Analysis

And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not—Paul now addresses believing wives married to unbelieving husbands, maintaining complete reciprocity. The phrase **and if he be pleased to dwell with her** again emphasizes the unbeliever's consent using *syneuddokei* (συνευδοκεῖ, "is willing"). **Let her not leave him** uses *aphietō* (ἀφίετω, "let her not send away/divorce").

In a patriarchal culture where wives had limited agency, Paul's instruction that wives should not divorce husbands acknowledges their capacity for decision-making. This reflects the Christian elevation of women's status. The believing wife's influence in a mixed marriage could lead to her husband's conversion (v. 16) and provides a sanctifying presence for children (v. 14).

Paul's counsel protects the stability of mixed marriages for the sake of both evangelism and children. Unless the unbeliever initiates separation (v. 15), the believer must honor the covenant. This reflects the gospel's call to faithfulness even in difficult circumstances, trusting God's power to work through a believing spouse.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman wives who converted to new religions often faced intense pressure from husbands, as religious devotion was expected to align with the household's

patron gods. Paul's instruction to remain married despite religious difference was countercultural, trusting God's sanctifying work through the believing wife.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's equal treatment of believing wives and husbands reflect Christianity's elevation of women?
2. What challenges do believing spouses face in mixed marriages, and how can the church support them?
3. How should a believing spouse balance honoring marriage with maintaining faithfulness to Christ?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	γυνή	ἥτις	ἔχει	ἄνδρα	ἄπιστον	καὶ	αὐτόν
And	the woman	which	hath	an husband	that believeth not	And	her
G2532	G1135	G3748	G2192	G435	G571	G2532	G846
συνευδοκεῖ	οἰκεῖν	μετ'	αὐτόν	μὴ	ἀφίετω	αὐτόν	
be pleased	to dwell	with	her	not	leave	her	
G4909	G3611	G3326	G846	G3361	G863	G846	

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org