



# So I Married a Cretan

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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Introduction:  
“Cretan!”

What an accusation. The historical reputation of the Cretans is pretty bad. Even today, the word brings negative images to our mind. When we call someone a Cretan, we are saying they are pretty much the scum of the earth. They have no manners. They can't be let out in civilized company. They are rude and rotten. They are barbarians. Paul said that one of their own described them as “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (**Titus 1:12**). And yet, Paul left Titus behind on the island of Crete because the gospel had an impact there (cf. **Titus 1:5**). Christians were living among these Cretans. Imagine what that would have been like? How would you live among these folks? What if you were married to one of them? How would that work?

I highly doubt many of us would claim our spouse is actually a Cretan. However, I do know that we have several who are spiritually mismatched—Christians who are married to non-Christians or to fallen Christians. And while the non-spiritual spouse may or may not measure up to the term Cretan, it can be a rough journey nevertheless. With that in mind, I'd like to consider Paul's advice to these Christians among the Cretans in **Titus 3:1-2** and give some thought to the very difficult relationship of being married to one. Consider what he says and see if there isn't some good advice for being married to someone who doesn't match up with you spiritually.

Discussion:

I. Be submissive.

- A. I know this is shocking. But if Paul would tell Christian citizens to be submissive to the governing authorities even to obey them, he is going to tell Christian spouses to submit to their Cretan spouses as well. Being a Christian married to a non-Christian does not provide a free ticket for unsubmitive behavior in the marriage. And while we may be tempted to think this is just a reference to wives submitting to non-Christian husbands and not vice versa, keep in mind that Paul's teaching on marriage in **Ephesians 5** follows this statement: “Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (**Ephesians 5:21**, ESV).
- B. In other words, the description of marital roles in **Ephesians 5:22-33** is a picture of mutual submission. Husbands loving wives while wives respect husbands is behavior that is acted out because each partner is submitting to what is most needed by the spouse. What if your spouse is a Cretan? What if your spouse doesn't love the Lord and therefore doesn't love or respect you properly? Paul's advice is not to try to go head to head with them in a battle of disobedience to God. Rather, submit to them out of love for God. **I Corinthians 7:12-13** explains that if you are married to a Cretan, you are not to leave them. But neither are you to stay with them in some kind of technical marriage while ignoring your role as husband or wife.
- C. Allow me to explain why this matters so much. Do you want to know what most impacts Cretans for the gospel? Seeing someone actually live it. Not only that, seeing them be impacted negatively by living it, but doing so anyway. It is one thing to “go to church” on Sundays. It is another to live it every day. It is one thing to talk a good game. It is another to get out on the playing field and run the plays when the opposing team is trying to shut you down. Cretans see people who claim to be Christian all the time who end up living just like them when the going gets tough. Let the gospel really change you. And it has only really changed you when you still live it when the Cretans are against you.

II. Be ready for every good work.

- A. Paul takes his advice to the next level with this statement. When we talk about submission, even obedience, we might think we are fulfilling the advice when we maintain some kind of technical submission and always do just what is required of us. But Paul says we don't wait around to be told. We don't wait around to be required. Rather, we are ready for every good work.
- B. Are you married to a Cretan? Don't just technically submit to them; be prepared for every good work. How can you serve them better and more? Hey, I get it, your Cretan spouse may be unfit for any good work (**Titus 1:16**). You don't set yourself apart by acting like they act, but by pursuing every good work you can. As Jesus taught in **Matthew 5:43-48**, we don't simply do good to those who do good to us. In fact, we purposefully do good for those who live as our enemies even if they live in the same house. Remember the golden rule: treat your Cretan the way you want to be treated (**Matthew 7:12**).

### III. Do not speak evil of them.

- A. The word here is “blaspheme,” but in this context refers to slandering and maligning. It means purposefully making them look bad. This is tough. After all, Cretans are doing evil. Sometimes they are flat mean. They interfere with our service to God. They speak evil of you (**I Peter 4:4**). It is just so easy to return the favor. Fight against that tendency. That tendency is not from God, but from the evil one.
- B. Don’t malign you Cretan.
  1. Don’t malign them to the kids. I know this is easy because you hope to protect your children from their evil influence. You think the way to do it is to make your Cretan look bad. But find another way to protect them from the evil influence, maligning your Cretan is not the way to do it.
  2. Brothers, don’t malign them to your buddies. Sisters, don’t malign them to your girlfriends. How easy it is to get together with friends and roast your spouse, especially if your spouse is sinning. Speak about them with honor and respect. Find something that you can respect them for and share that.
  3. Don’t malign them to your “prayer group.” Oh, how easy it is to speak evil of our spouse under the guise of asking for prayers. There is an appropriate way to ask for prayers. After all, when Peter and John were abused by “Cretans” (not that they were literally Cretans, but metaphorically), they gathered with their brethren and prayed (cf. **Acts 4:23-31**). Consider the motivation. Is your prayer request actually for your spouse, concerned about sins that are separating them from God and wanting them to turn and live because you love your spouse? Or is your prayer request a veiled attempt to let everyone know what a rotten louse your spouse is? Is your prayer request a legitimate request that others would ask God to strengthen you as you face temptation and hardship? Or is it a veiled attempt to let everyone know what you have to put up with and how bad you have it?
  4. Don’t malign them to your shepherds, whether your actual shepherds in the church or simply people you are turning to for counsel. How easy it is to claim to be seeking advice when really all you are doing is fishing for sympathy regarding how awful your life is with your Cretan spouse. There is a difference between seeking advice and support from godly counselors and just passing along the juicy tidbits of wickedness that your spouse has committed. “You’ll never guess what he did today.” “Do you have any idea what I have to put up with from her?” When talking to your shepherds and counselors, are you really seeking support and advice to maintain your service to God while under the strain of hardship? Or are you just gossiping and trying to make your spouse look bad and you look good by contrast?
  5. Don’t malign your spouse to your spouse. Be careful how you speak to your spouse. Do you take their unbelieving status as a ticket to bash them, ridicule them, mock them? Don’t. Do not malign them even to their faces. Speak to them with respect and honor. After all, husbands are to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands (**Ephesians 5:22-33**).

### IV. Avoid quarreling.

- A. Wow! Surely we should argue the faith with an unbelieving spouse. Actually, not. We are supposed to avoid quarreling with Cretans, even if we are married to them. Please do not misunderstand; we are supposed to defend the faith. As **I Peter 3:15** says, we should always be ready to make a defense of the hope we have in Christ to anyone who asks, including a Cretan spouse. But the gospel of Jesus Christ must not become for us a source of quarreling with our mates. Don’t take today’s sermon or Bible class lesson home and make it the basis of picking a fight.
- B. Sadly, too many Christian try to spread the gospel this way. “What can I find to argue with this person about to prove to them that I’m right and they’re wrong?” That is not the way to spread the gospel. If you want your spouse to learn what you learned in a sermon or class or your own personal Bible study, start living it. As **I Peter 3:1-2** points out, when you live properly with your spouse, you may actually win them without a word and especially without an argument or a fight.
- C. So, when you get home after spending time with God’s people in an assembly, and you find your spouse drinking a beer, watching tv, and generally being a Cretan, don’t walk up to them, slap the beer out of their hand, kick them in the shins, and cry out, “Don’t you know you’re going to hell?” Avoid that quarrel.

### V. Be gentle.

- A. Once again, Paul takes his point to the next level. We might think we are fulfilling this advice simply by avoiding a technical fight. Peace is not merely the absence of physical or verbal sparring. It is the presence of gentle treatment. After all, the wisdom that is from above is first peaceable, then gentle (**James 3:17**). The word translated “gentle” here is not the most common word we see for “gentleness” (in fact, we’ll see that one in our next point). This word is talking about fair, equitable, mild treatment. It is the “reasonable-

ness” of **Philippians 4:5**. It is contrasted with the harsh treatment of an unjust master in **I Peter 2:18**. We might talk about this as kindness, treating them the way you would someone who is not a Cretan. Show them God’s love through action and word.

- B. Consider your motivation in how you respond to your spouse. Do you love your Cretan and long for them to repent so they can live eternally with God? Or do you despise your Cretan and just want them cut you some slack so your life can be easier? Don’t misunderstand; I’m not saying it is wrong to want some relief. But gentleness will come from a love that longs for your spouse to live in fellowship with God and have the joys that come with that. Never move to the point of wanting them to be punished for how they’ve treated you or not wanting them to repent lest they get away with what they’ve done to you. That will lead you to want to take their punishment into your own hands. That will cause the harsh, biting, sarcastic, hateful, mean treatment. Don’t give back to them what they are giving to you. Be equitable, reasonable, mild, gentle.

#### VI. Be courteous.

- A. The word translated “courtesy” in the ESV is actually the word most commonly translated “gentleness.” And it doesn’t mean timid, fearful, weak. It is the picture of controlled strength. Many of us have heard before that this is the same word used to describe a tamed horse. It is not that the horse is weakened; it is that the horse has learned to direct its strength to useful pursuits rather than simply to pursuing wild selfishness. Treat your Cretan spouse with courtesy.
- B. The text says to show “all” courtesy to “all” men. How much more should we show this meekness and courtesy to our spouses even if they are Cretans. They may be rude. They may be hateful. They may be downright mean. Do not respond in kind. Show courtesy. As Paul says in **Romans 12:20-21**, don’t repay evil for evil. Repay their evil with good. In so doing, you will heap burning coals on their heads. If they are pricked by your good deeds, these will be like burning coals of shame as they long to change and treat you the way you have treated them. On the other hand, if they don’t repent, then this will be like burning coals that God who is defending you will pour on their heads in judgment.

#### VII. Remembering how you got where you are.

- A. **Titus 3:3-7** explains why you should treat your Cretan these ways. Remember that you were once caught up in sin just like your Cretan spouse. You were once rebellious and disobedient. You may protest that you’ve never been as bad as your spouse. And perhaps, as man measures these things, you haven’t. But you have been a sinner. And as God measures these things you fell short of His glory (**Romans 3:23**).
- B. How did God treat you when you were weak, sinful, and ungodly? Consider **Romans 5:6-8**. Rather than picking fights with you, maligning you, hating you, dominating you, He served you. He actually submitted Himself to your needs, sacrificing Jesus Christ to provide you redemption from your sins. As Paul tells Titus, this didn’t happen because of your amazing righteousness and all the good things you did. You didn’t earn this courtesy, gentleness, and peace God pursued with you. This happened by God’s grace.
- C. Yes, you are changed now. You are changing now. Your spouse is a Cretan and you are a Christian. But remember how you got there. It was not by your greatness and goodness. It was by God’s. Pray for your spouse that they will accept the goodness of God and be changed as well, not just so you can have relief, but so they can be saved from the wrath of God they are walking headlong into.

#### Conclusion:

Being married to a Christian is tough sometimes. I have no doubt, being married to a non-Christian, whether they fully measure up to the Cretan label or not is much more so. How hard it must be to experience the joys of Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit and not be able to share them with the person you’ve committed yourself to most in this world. It must be especially hard if they are actively fighting against it. But let me encourage you to respond in godly ways. You married a Cretan, that doesn’t mean you have to act like one. Respond with Jesus’ love. And if you need our help, and I’m sure you do, rely on us for support. God has us here to help you.