

your partner for forgiveness wherever appropriate. Ask Him to continue to richly bless you with the gifts of the Holy Spirit – gifts like “love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22). Ask Him to help you both live with the decisions that will prayerfully emerge through this process.

A Few Additional Suggestions

Some couples will be able to complete all of these steps in one sitting. Some will not. As a result, if an hour passes and you’re not done with the exercise, make an appointment to come back to your discussion within 48 hours. The objective of this exercise is not to see how fast you can get through each step. The objective is to help you both prayerfully identify new ideas that can guide you to some Christ-centered mutually satisfying resolutions.

As you prayerfully struggle through each of these steps, you should also find that the Holy Spirit will take control of the issues and problems you’ve described, and your egos will take a backseat. If this occurs, you will also find that your hearts will soften and some mutually satisfying resolutions will emerge that you can both live with.

And finally, if you try these suggestions, and are unsuccessful, then it may be that you need some outside help. If that is the case, do not delay in finding the help you need. Consult your pastors or a marriage friendly therapist.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

INTERFAITH WEB SITE

www.Interfaith.goarch.org

Center for Family Care

www.family.goarch.org

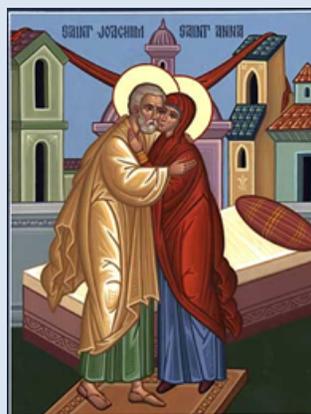
OUTREACH & EVANGELISM WEB SITE

www.Outreach.goarch.org

PUBLICATIONS

By Charles Joanides Ph.D., LMFT

*When You Inter marry
Ministering to Inter married Couples
Attending to Your Marriage*



Marriage and Family

Some Practical Steps

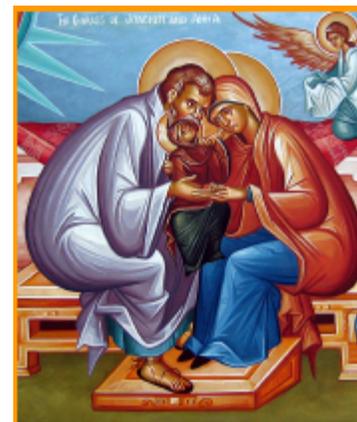
Department of Marriage and Family



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Marriage and Family
Greek Orthodox Archdioceses of America

Getting Past Couple Gridlock

*Rev. Fr. Charles Joanides, Ph.D.,
LMFT*



Father Charles,

I was raised Greek Orthodox and I married a man who was raised Catholic. After one year of marriage, we have been struggling with the following major question: In which religion will we raise our future children? I know that a successful marriage is built on sacrifice and consideration for your partner, but what do you do when one person has to give? I am not willing to compromise on this issue? Please help. As time passes, I feel more confused.

E-mail Respondent

I recently received this E-mail. My response appears below. While my response may be especially relevant to couples with similar issues and challenges, I believe my suggestions also relate to all couples who are struggling to get past couple gridlock and cultivate oneness. Here is how I answered this respondent.

Dear Respondent,

As you may already know from reading the information on the Interfaith Marriage Web site, couples who have strong connections to their religious and cultural backgrounds are more vulnerable to encountering challenges like those you've described. Often, it is not easy for such couples to come to mutually satisfying resolutions because both partners are highly committed to their backgrounds. Another closely related reason is because one partner usually has to make most of the concessions. As a result, many couples with high connections to their backgrounds are unable to reach mutually satisfying resolutions for months and even years. Even when changes occur in such marriages, they are often unilateral changes that create distance and negatively affect their relationship.

So, I'm glad you wrote me, because these days couples – especially newlyweds - can't afford to remain stuck for long periods of time. Gridlock is toxic, and it compromises oneness by infecting a young couple's marriage with destructive negativity. With that stated, here are some suggestions that I hope will help you both get past the gridlock you have written about to me.

My Suggestions

Step #1. Once you review my response, if you're interested in trying what I've suggested, inform your husband that you wrote to me for a second opinion, and let him review my E-mail. If he finds what I've written of value, and is willing to try these ideas, make an appointment with one another. You'll need around an hour to begin taking advantage of these suggestions.

Step #2. Formerly commit yourselves to finding some mutually satisfying Christ - centered resolutions. This step is important because it helps you form a partnership and begins to dissolve the-him-versus-her standoff that likely exists between the two of you whenever the issues you've described arise.

Step #3. Once you've formed a partnership, pray together for guidance and assistance. Your prayers should come from the heart. If possible, each of you should take turns praying. Whoever feels the most comfortable with this suggestion should begin. If you're not certain how to begin this step, begin by reciting prayers from each partner's tradition. Once you've read several prayers, end by speaking to god from your heart just as you might speak to a trusted mentor or parent figure.

Step #4. After you pray together, start defining and articulating the issues and problems in respectful language that you both understand. During this step, each of you should take turns speaking. One of you should write down the issues in objective language on a piece of paper entitled, "Our Christ-centered Partnership." You should also avoid becoming critical and contemptuous. Blame, criticism and contempt will quickly put one or both of you on the defensive and back into gridlock.

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Step #5. Assuming you complete step four, this next step will require you to clearly and respectfully talk about what you've done to loosen the gridlock. Often, partners have different opinions about what's been done. You should take turns speaking and listening when attempting to complete this step. Both partner's perspectives are important here and throughout this exercise. As you proceed through this step a common understanding of the issues and problems should emerge, along with a better understanding of the reasons that

have caused the gridlock. Warning: Do not proceed to the next step until you both believe steps four and five has been completed.

In an effort to complete the last two steps the following few observations might help. Please remember that both partners may have different opinions and strong beliefs regarding the steps that need to take place in order for them to get past the gridlock. Please also avoid getting too bogged down in the details – the devil is often in the details. Your common objective should be to chronicle what has been done and what you've done to resolve the gridlock.

Step #6. If you get through the first five steps, you are now ready to proceed to the sixth step. During this step you will want to begin identifying some new and different strategies that might prove helpful to you in your quest to find some mutually satisfying resolutions. During this step it's especially important that you work together in an effort to find new and different solutions. Recalling any counsel you've received from your pastors and what Scripture teaches should prove indispensable to you in identifying new potentially effective strategies.

Step #7. If you manage to get to this point, you are ready to proceed to the seventh step. During this step review all the information that was generated during the last step and prayerfully select the best and most promising strategies. Then try them.

Step #8. If you get through the first seven steps, before implementing the strategies you have identified, don't forget to complete this process by praying together. Your prayers should include the following thoughts and requests, but not be limited to them: Thank God for the love that you share. Ask God and