

Personal Questions that the Bible Answers

What does the Bible say about interracial marriage?

Before we attempt to answer this question, we must realize that “interracial marriage” involves spouses who belong to different races or ethnicities. However, “interracial marriage” is a *misnomer*. Why? There’s only one race on the planet: the human race. Here’s a more accurate term that, unfortunately, hasn’t yet become popular to use: “inter-ethnic marriage.”

Q. #1 Is interracial marriage legal in all 50 states? . . .

A. Interracial marriage in the US has been fully legal in all 50 states since 1967.

Q. #2 When was America’s first interracial marriage performed? Approximately when did that marriage occur? . . .

A. The first recorded “interracial” marriage (in today’s United States) was that of Pocahontas, the daughter of a Powhatan Indian chief. In Virginia, she married tobacco planter, John Rolfe, in 1614. (Incidentally, the first law *prohibiting* interracial marriage was passed by Maryland’s general assembly in 1691.)

Like most of the questions in my “What does the Bible say about?” Q&A series, this is another “Secondary Theology” question. [[See Warren’s detailed list](#) highlighting both theologies.*]

Q. How should we [Bereans](#) deal with *secondary* theologies? . . .

“Secondary theology” questions often stir up pretty heated arguments and strong emotions. That said, there are some who argue that interracial marriage *should be avoided* as a result of prejudice the couple will receive, whether from their families or from the surrounding culture. But! Since when should we allow the *unbiblical* beliefs of others to be a determining factor in our decisions?

Before we dig in and check our Bibles, what do you *presume* God’s words say about “interracial marriage”? . . .

To see what the Bible says about interracial marriage, I'll start with an Old Testament passage from [the Torah](#). Mosaic Law commanded the Israelites *not* to engage in interracial marriage! First read [Deuteronomy 7:1–4](#) NIV. Compare the same passage in [The Message](#) version.

By the way, did Moses comply with that commandment to never engage in an interracial marriage? . . . No. He married a Cushite, which was a non-Israelite woman.

Q. So, on what specific basis did God command the Israelites, “*Don’t intermarry with them*”? . . . Was it based on the different races of those seven nations? . . . No!

A. The reason for this command was not skin color or ethnicity. Rather, it was religion. God ordered the Jews to *abstain from* interracial marriage because foreigners then were worshiping false gods and their idols. Failing to obey that commandment to never marry heathens, the Israelites would have been led astray if they intermarried with idol worshipers or pagans.

That’s exactly what happened in Israel! Read what Prophet Malachi had written about inter-religious marriage: [Malachi 2:11](#).

Okay. That’s what the OT says about inter-religious marriages. A similar “*spiritual* purity” principle is laid out in the *NT*. Read [2 Corinthians 6:14](#). Note: That similar *NT* principle also has absolutely nothing to do with race!

Realize this: The Israelites believed in the one true God. Just as they were commanded, *Do not marry idolaters*, we Christians (who are also believers in the one true God) are *commanded* not to marry unbelievers. A Christian shouldn’t marry a non-Christian, no matter how kind and good he or she is.

Do you agree with that? That’s what God says in his holy Word!

We know well of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s drive to attain racial equality. He declared that a person should be “judged by his or her character, not skin color.” In that same vein, there’s no place in the life of the Christian for discrimination, favoritism, or prejudice, based on race. Be sure to read what James writes about the royal rule of love; in this passage, he clearly forbids favoritism: [James 2:1-10](#).

Yes, James focused therein on “showing favoritism to wealthy, powerful people,” but the same can be said of discriminating based on race, gender, or other factors. That would be *sinful!*

The biblical perspective is that there’s only one “race” — it’s the human race in which everyone has descended from Adam and Eve.

When selecting a mate, a Christian should have no concern for race or national ethnicity. Instead, he or she should **first find out if the potential spouse has become born again** — through faith in Jesus Christ. Apostle John makes that clear in [John 3:3-5](#).

If it helps you appreciate what “born again” means, I found a phrase you might like: “born from above.”

The Bible clearly gives us the biblical standard for choosing a spouse: It’s to be **based on one’s faith in Christ**, not one’s skin color or race or any other worldly characteristics.

Summary Let’s review what God has already told us in our Old and New Testament readings.

1 — A couple considering marriage needs to weigh many factors. While **a difference in ethnicity** shouldn’t be ignored, it **should never be the determining factor** in whether a couple marries.

2 — When an interracial couple faces discrimination and ridicule, the husband and wife should be prepared to respond to such prejudice in a biblical manner.

3 — Also, we ought to recall what Apostle Paul wrote to believers in Rome. In **Romans 10:12** he said: “*For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*” Note: When Paul uses “all,” he truly means that our Lord Jesus blesses “everyone.” No distinctions! Marriage is honorable among all. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews makes this very clear: **[Hebrews 13:4](#)**.

Clearly, a “colorblind church” and/or “a *Christian* interracial marriage” can be a powerful illustration of each individual’s equality and oneness in Christ.

Ultimately, interracial marriage is **a decision that should be made between the couple and God**. Of course, the couple should take the feelings of their family into account. However, since **there’s no biblical command *against* interracial marriage**, it clearly becomes a matter of Christian freedom.



Question: What does the Bible say about interracial marriage?

Answer: The Bible never says that interracial marriage is wrong. Anyone who forbids interracial marriage is doing so without biblical authority.

The Bible is clear that when both parties are believers (*equally yoked*), interracial marriage is *not* wrong. It’s never a matter of “right or wrong” but of “prayer and personal choice.” Amen.

* Open and print Warren’s “**[Primary and Secondary Theologies](#)**.”