

## HOW TO FIX AN UNLAWFUL MARRIAGE

Both Ezra and Nehemiah had to deal with the tragedy of unlawful marriages. Unlawful marriages are certainly a problem in our time and place. What did God have them do about unlawful marriages?

Ezra's reaction was sorrowful. He was in shock when the leaders reported the problem of marriages with foreign women (which were against the law of God but legal in man's eyes—**Deuteronomy 7:1-7**). He tore his clothes and pulled his hair out. After fasting and sitting all day in shock, he prayed to God about it (**Ezra 9:5-13**).

His example stirred the people to join him, and they determined not only to feel sorry about the sin but to also undo the wrong they had done. (**10:5-17**).

Nehemiah reacted differently when he saw this problem (**Nehemiah 13:23-29**). He was provoked to use force against them. Instead of pulling out his own hair as Ezra did, he pulled out their hair! He beat them and drove them out of the temple (even some of the priests and Levites were guilty). He cursed them and forced them to swear that they would not allow their children to marry pagan women.

Most importantly, Ezra and Nehemiah led the people to solve the problem. They had to go to Jerusalem and meet the judges concerning their unlawful wives (**Ezra 10**). They would lose their inheritance as Israelites if they chose not to meet, confess, and repent, AND PUT AWAY their unlawful wives.

This was not an easy thing to do, but it was necessary. The best solution was for the woman to convert as Ruth did many years before. If she refused, she could not be married; else, her Jewish husband would forfeit his home, and she would be homeless anyway.

The last verse in the book says that some of them had children. It's an even tougher situation, but children cannot justify remaining in an unlawful marriage. They were not to put away the children; they were still to be fathers.