

Dear Ashley,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You expressed the need for biblical guidance. You told us that your parents have chosen a very nice person for you to marry, which is the custom in Pakistan. You said you agreed to the choice in obedience to your parents. However, you are already in a relationship with your first cousin. This is a relationship that your parents and other family members strongly condemn, mainly because you are first cousins from the same blood. Your cousin wants you to pray with him in strong faith that one day God will bring the two of you together. You wanted to know if it was right to pray in faith for such a thing.

We want you to know that we sympathize with your difficult situation. Before we address whether it is right to pray that you and your cousin will one day be together, the question of whether first cousin marriages are prohibited by God must first be examined scripturally. Leviticus Chapter 18 marks the boundaries for marriage and sexual relations. The chapter gives a complete and concise list of the marriages that God forbids. Marriage with a first cousin is not on the list. Therefore, the scriptures do not prohibit marriage between first cousins. However, some countries and states do! For example, about half of the fifty states of the United States of America do not recognize first cousin marriages as valid. You may need to check with a lawyer to see if a first cousin marriage is valid in Pakistan. Assuming such a marriage is valid, we would encourage you to consult a medical doctor and seek advice about the wisdom of having children. If there is a predisposition for certain diseases on the family line, the chances of your future children inheriting those diseases are increased.

All of the above having been said, you told us that you chose to be obedient to your family's choice of a husband for you and from what you say, you are leaning toward complying with their wishes. To go back on your word would not be an admirable thing to do. Your cousin wants you to pray that one day God will bring the two of you together. Perhaps that may happen. However, you must ask yourself if such a prayer is proper or is it just self-serving. The scriptures that deal with prayer in the Bible are about asking for strength and comfort in difficult situations and for the will of God to be done in our lives. When we ask for these things, God supports us through our difficulties because we learn to rely on him for spiritual strength. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John 5:14) This scripture tells us that proper praying is not along the line of making requests that our wills be done, in opposition to the divine will, but along the line of full submission to God's will, whatever that may be. The Apostle James declares, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss"—in harmony with your own desires and not in harmony with God's plan (James 4:3).

We are not telling you what to pray for. We are only suggesting that you think very carefully about your entire situation, immediate and future, and ask God in prayer what his will is for you.

Then ask him to direct you in the path that you should go. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6) "In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation." (Psalm 5:3) Be assured that God will answer your prayer for discernment. Once you know what his will is, you will then be able to move forward knowing that your decision is the right one and is pleasing to God.

We hope we have helped you. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio