

ENGAGE

- What does it mean to be unequally yoked?
- Is it only meant for marriage?
- I will be speaking about integrity in how we align ourselves with people, business, individuals, society in general and worldviews.
- There is a tension with the two statements: “come out from them and be separate” and “be in the world, but not of the world”.
- As the Temple, as Ministers of Reconciliation, and as ministers who are blameless and have not discredited themselves, we are to watch with whom we align ourselves and how we phrase our positions to be clear that we represent the King of Kings.

EXAMINE*2. (14-18) Paul tells them to narrow their love.*

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” 17 Therefore, “Come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” 18 And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

a. **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers:** Paul is speaking to the overly broad affections of the Corinthian Christians. They had joined themselves to **unbelievers**, and this prevented their reconciliation with Paul.

i. The idea of **do not be unequally yoked together** is based on [Deuteronomy 22:9](#), which prohibited yoking together two different animals. It speaks of joining two things that should not be joined.

ii. In what ways had the Corinthian Christians become **unequally yoked together with unbelievers**? How can we do this? Certainly by marrying an unbeliever, which is the most common way this principle is applied. “A very wise and very holy man was given his judgment on this point: ‘A man who is truly pious, marrying with an unconverted woman, will either draw back to perdition, or have a cross during life.’ The same may be said of a *pious woman* marrying an *unconverted man*. Such persons cannot say this petition of the Lord’s prayer, *Lead us not into temptation*. They *plunge* into it of their own accord.” (Clarke)

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iii. However, Paul means much more here than only marrying an unbeliever. It really applies to any environment where we let the world influence our thinking. When we are being *conformed to this world* and are not being *transformed by the renewing of your mind* ([Romans 12:2](#)), we join together with unbelievers in an ungodly way.

iv. This speaks especially to the issue of *influence*. Paul is not suggesting that Christians never associate with unbelievers (he makes this clear in [1 Corinthians 5:9-13](#)). The principle is that we are to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world, like a ship should be in the water, but water shouldn't be in the ship. If the world is *influencing* us, it is clear we are **unequally yoked together with unbelievers**. And this unequal yoke, or ungodly influence, may come through a book, a movie, a television show, a magazine, or even through worldly Christian friends. Most Christians are *far too indiscriminate* about the things they allow to influence their minds and lives.

"Yoked together" (NIV), "mismatched" (NRSV), "unequally yoked" (KJV) is *heterozygeō*, referring to draft animals that need different kinds of yokes, because they are of different species such as an ox and a donkey (Leviticus 19:19). The word means, "be unevenly yoked, be mismatched with someone." [\[251\]](#) You believers need to be careful that you're not too closely tied to unbelievers, Paul says.

^{14b} For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God." (6:14-16a)

Paul uses five words to describe a close relationship " a closeness that can hurt the believers.

1. "In common" (NIV), "partnership" (NRSV), "fellowship" (KJV) has the basic idea of "sharing, participation." [\[252\]](#)
2. "Fellowship" (NIV, NRSV), "communion" (KJV) is *koinōnia*, "close association involving mutual interests and sharing, association, communion, fellowship, close relationship." [\[253\]](#) This refers to a relationship built upon common interests.
3. "Harmony" (NIV), "agreement" (NRSV), "concord" (KJV) is *symphōnēsis* (from which get our word "symphony") "a state of shared interests, agreement." [\[254\]](#)
4. "In common" (NIV), "share" (NRSV), "part" (KJV) is *meris*, "share, portion." [\[255\]](#)
5. "Agreement" is from a word that originally meant "a putting together or joint deposit (of votes)," hence, "approval, assent, agreement." [\[256\]](#)

v. We all like to believe that we can be around ungodly things as much as we want and that we are strong enough to ward off the influence. But we must take seriously the words of Scripture: *Do not be*

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deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33). It needs to come back to the simple question from [Romans 12:2](#): Are we being *conformed to this world*, or are we being *transformed by the renewing of your mind*?

vi. The Corinthian Christians thought like worldly people, not like godly people. They gained this way of looking at life – or at least they stayed in it – because of their ungodly associations. Paul tells them to break those yokes of fellowship with the ungodly!

b. What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? The Corinthian Christians were too loving and too affectionate in the sense that they thought it was “accepting” of them to allow **lawlessness** with **righteousness**, to accept **darkness** along with the **light**, and to admit **Belial** along with **Christ**.

i. **Belial** is a word borrowed from Hebrew, meaning *worthlessness* or *wickedness*. Here it is used as another word for *Satan*. “The term is used only in this place in the New Testament, but very often in the Old Testament, to express men notoriously wicked and scandalous.” (Poole)

c. What communion has light with darkness? By using the term **communion**, Paul indicates that he really means *influence* more than *presence*. “Parties are said to be in communion when they are so united that what belongs to the one belongs to the other, or when what is true of the one is true of the other.” (Hodge)

d. What agreement has the temple of God with idols? Apparently, the Corinthian Christians still struggled with the idolatry problem Paul referred to in [1 Corinthians 8-10](#). Their association with **idols** influenced their thinking, making it more and more worldly.

e. You are the temple of the living God: In [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#), Paul wrote of individual Christians as being temples of God. Here, he refers to the church as a whole being the temple. Because temples are holy places and should be protected against things that might defile the holy place, we should protect our hearts and minds as holy places before the Lord.

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16, reference to the church)

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19, a reference to an individual's physical body in relationship to prostitutes)

i. So, because [Ezekiel 37:26-27](#) tells us God is in the midst of His temple (**I will dwell in them and walk among them**), [Isaiah 52:11](#) tells us how we should make that temple a holy place (**Come out from among them and be separate... do not touch what is unclean**). The promise **and I will receive you** reminds us that this is not only a separation *from* evil but also a separation *unto* God. “It is not a question simply of trying to empty your heart and life of every worldly desire – what an awful impossibility! It is rather opening your heart wide to all the love of God in Christ, and letting that love just sweep through you and exercise its expulsive power till your heart is filled with love.” (Redpath)

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ii. Paul quotes [Jeremiah 31:9](#) to show the benefit of separating from worldly influence: a more intimate relationship with God (**I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters**). There is always a glorious promise for those who are willing to separate themselves from the world's influences for the sake of godliness.

iii. As Paul quotes these passages, he isn't necessarily quoting them word-for-word from either the Hebrew or the Septuagint. When Paul quotes Scripture, he often paraphrases it. "A comparison of texts reveals that he did not feel himself bound to quote slavishly word for word, but rather according to the sense and with the purpose of applying and showing the relevance of the revelation to the circumstances of his readers." (Hughes)

f. **Come out from among them and be separate:** This call deals with the problem of "too much affection" Paul mentioned in [2 Corinthians 6:12](#). We really can love too much, thinking we may just *add* the love of God without renouncing the ideas of Satan and this world. Remember that one of the seeds that failed in the parable of the soils had ground that was *too* fertile. It would grow *everything*.

g. **Says the LORD Almighty:** The title **Almighty** uses the ancient Greek word *pantokrater*, which means, "the one who has his hand on everything." In the whole New Testament, the word is used only here and in the book of Revelation. Paul wants us to understand that it is the sovereign God of heaven who offers us adoption as His children as we separate unto Him.

i. The call to purity and separation unto God flows from the offer of reconciliation mentioned at the end of [2 Corinthians 5](#). "A man cannot accept reconciliation with God and live in sin; because the renunciation of sin is involved in the acceptance of reconciliation. Paul never assumes that men may accept one benefit of redemption, and reject another. They cannot take pardon and refuse sanctification." (Hodge)

QUESTIONS

- What kinds of things does Paul list in 6:4-5 as showing that he is a true servant of God?
- Why was Paul so careful not to give offense in anything? (3)
- List some of the physical sufferings which commended Paul as a minister of God (4-5)
- List those areas where Paul demonstrated his integrity as a minister of God (6-7)
- Paul lists pairs of opposites that show he is a true servant of God in 6:8. Different groups of people would describe him in completely different ways.
- How do such opposite statements both show his true status?
- With what kind of people does Paul warn the Corinthians against getting entangled (6:14)?
- What do we not have in common with unbelievers?
- In what way should we separate from unbelievers?
- What amount of struggle cause us to stop behaving as ministers of God?
- What kind of relationship does God promise to those who are faithful to Him (6:18)?

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- In what way does God live with us and walk among us?
- What is necessary to receive the promise of having God as our Father who dwells among us? (17-18)
- Under what conditions will God receive us?

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