

**BELIEVERS ARE CALLED  
TO WORSHIP GOD FULLY,  
LIVING LIVES OF  
INTEGRITY AND PURITY**

**2 CORINTHIANS 6**

# INTRODUCTION

- Paul opens with the importance of well-grounded character in Gospel ministry.
- He spends his time arguing against character obstacles because Christians should not put anything in the way of anyone's coming to faith in Christ.
- Character matters.

# INTRODUCTION

- Paul then exhorts the Corinthians to separate themselves from the false worship of the culture.
- Christians can't worship God and false idols. Christians can't attach themselves to pagan worship practices and worship Yahweh. God has no rival and commands total worship from His children.
- Set yourselves apart, Paul says. Christians must walk in holiness by the power of the Spirit, leaving the ways of the world.

**BELIEVERS' LIVES CAN  
EITHER VALIDATE OR  
HARM THE GOSPEL  
MESSAGE**

**2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-13**

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- Paul does not want anything in his character or actions to cause harm to his ministry as an ambassador of Christ (5:20), and so he removes stumbling blocks in his life that might cause harm to the Gospel.
- People would certainly make accusations against him, but Paul desires that these allegations would always be baseless. The apostle wanted his life to be a positive advertisement for the Gospel.

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- Instead of harming his ministry as an ambassador, Paul gives testimony to the truthfulness of his apostolic ministry through the way he lives his life (verse 4).
- He then returns to the subject of suffering.
- Paul regarded his suffering not as random problems but as God-appointed hardships that built out his credentials as a true apostle.

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- So Paul lists his credentials in verses 4–5.
- Paul endured troubles, hardships, distress, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights and hunger.
- He did all this through God's empowerment.

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- Moving to verses 5–6, Paul lists nine inner qualities that are necessary to meet the challenges he listed in verses 4–5.
- These traits are: purity (practical righteousness), understanding (skill in dealing with others), patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, sincere love, a commitment to truthful speech, reliance on the power of God and an equipping with weapons of righteousness.

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- The phrase in verse 7, “weapons of righteousness,” has some debate surrounding it.
- The phrase means either weapons that the God of righteousness provides or the weapons Paul has in mind (Romans 13:12) are Gospel presentation and argumentation.
- In either sense, Paul calls us to defend the Gospel with various means, including the way we live.

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- Nine paradoxes are presented in verses 8–10; these are broken into three categories:
  - the responses Paul receives in his ministry
  - a defense of his ministry
  - the results of Paul's labors

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- Kinds of responses that Paul receives in his ministry.
  - Honor by some and dishonor by others.
  - Some slandered him while others praised him.
  - The designation of either an imposter or a true apostle

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- Defense of his ministry.
- The defense comes by way of more paradoxes: He might be unknown in that some did not recognize the validity of his ministry, but he was known by God; though he was dying he yet lived; and despite beatings (being punished), Paul was not killed.
- The apostle was able to endure these things through the enablement of the God who sustained him.

# COMMEND OURSELVES

- Result of Paul's labor.
- Verse 10 presents the final paradoxes:
- Although a life such as his would seem to naturally lead to sorrow, Paul always rejoices.
- Despite his poverty, he continues to pour into others spiritually, thus making many rich. The apostle may have had nothing in the way of possessions and yet he possessed everything (spiritual blessings).

# NOT RESTRICTED

- In verses 11–13, Paul's desire is reciprocity within the church, loving and caring for one another as Christ has done for His Church.
- But the Corinthians couldn't reciprocate what Paul was giving.
- They weren't, as Paul mentions in verse 13, opening their hearts to Paul.
- Paul explains this in the next verses.

**BELIEVERS MUST  
CLEANSE THEMSELVES  
FROM EVERY  
DEFILEMENT OF BODY  
AND SPIRIT**

**2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1**

# UNEQUALLY YOKED

- Paul desires the Corinthians to open their hearts and not withhold their affections from him. But they were hindered from doing so. Why?
- They were torn between their father in the spirit (Paul) and his opposition (the persistently rebellious, the false apostles at Corinth).
- In verse 14, Paul labels these individuals as unbelievers.

# UNEQUALLY YOKED

- The solution? They are to separate themselves from these unbelievers.
- False apostles posed a threat to believers who yoked themselves to them.
- When yoked, the unbeliever's choices and direction will strongly influence or control the believer's choices and direction, just like animals yoked together.

# UNEQUALLY YOKED

- These verses could be used to defend the complete isolation of Christians from the surrounding culture, however that's not what Paul is explaining here.
- Paul argued against such an idea in 1 Corinthians 5:9–10. However, in context, those who are religious unbelievers have the potential to lead believers astray from “sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3)

# UNEQUALLY YOKED

- The questions in verses 14–16 are rhetorical and designed to help the reader identify the chasm between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.
- The name Belial is given to Satan in verse 15; it was a word that translates an Old Testament word that means “worthless person.” In the Greek, it can be translated as “lawless person.”

# ANSWER TO QUESTIONS

- The answer to all of the questions posed should be “None!”
- Christians belong to God alone. Semi-loyalty doesn't exist for the Christian.
- Verse 16 boils it down to worship. It's helpful to note that the connection to nonbelievers is not meant to imply day-to-day contact.

# TEMPLE

- The background for the use of “living God” is the Old Testament, notably the God of Israel compared to other lifeless idols.
- The promise from God in verse 16 is a recurring promise from God to Israel: Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27.
- In verse 17, Paul quotes Isaiah 52:11.

# TEMPLE

- The context from the Isaiah passage was for the Jewish exiles to leave the pagan place of exile in Babylon and return to Judea and Jerusalem.
- This is what God calls each and every Christian to on a daily basis.
- We must forsake all attachments that conflict with the worship of God and the identity we have as His children.

# TEMPLE

- In 1 Corinthians 3:16–17, the church constitutes the temple of God.
- God welcomes His children back home, but He calls for their obedience.
- He commands our separation from the surrounding culture for the sole reason that His glory and His worship will not be compromised.

# CONCLUSION

- Because God promises this, we can flee our sinful practices.
- When Jesus calls the disciples he commands them to drop their nets and follow Him.
- We must leave everything behind in order to take hold of the life God offers us, forsaking all impurity of our flesh.

QUESTION;

UNEQUALLY YOKED

# WHAT IS A YOKE?



# AN UNEQUAL YOKE



# UNEQUAL YOKE

- 2 Corinthians 6:14 - “do not be unequally yoked”
- NASB - “Do not be bound together with unbelievers”
- An unequally yoked team would go in circles because one was stronger than the other or had a different stride and cadence than the other.
- Paul discourages the Corinthians to avoid unequal partnership with unbelievers because they have opposite ideas and goals (go in circles).

# UNEQUAL YOKE

- Deuteronomy 22:10 - “Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.”
- Paul was likely thinking of this OT command when he wrote this letter to the church in Corinth.
- Two animals are supposed to work together and become one. When you have two unequal animals (or people) yoked together you don't have harmony and you don't have productivity.

# HOW BROAD?

- How do we interpret 2 Corinthians 6:14 in light of 2 Corinthians 5:9-11?
- 2 Corinthians 5 is a specific admonition about not participating with sexually immoral people (coarse language, obscenity).
- That would be participating in or condoning certain behavior (sexual jokes, hanging out in bars, seeing raunchy movies, etc.).

# HOW BROAD?

- 2 Corinthians 6:14 seems to be applying a broader principle. How is my interaction with the world affecting my behavior and witness?
- Most of us will be employed by or be working with unbelievers. But that is may not a partnership in the sense that we are pulling shoulder to shoulder.
- Even Christian partners betray the Lord because of the difference in spiritual states of the partners.

# HOW BROAD?

- We should ask: What ends am I furthering by becoming part of their world? Am I doing it on their terms or God's terms?
- This is a question that Christian writers must ask if they want to get into the secular market.
- This is a question Christian musicians must ask if they want to cross over into other musical markets.

# HOW BROAD?

- Not all associations are yokes, but yoke has two characteristics.
- First, a yoke is not easily broken. It generally is a permanent relationship. Two animals yoked together cannot break the yoke without help.
- Second, a yoke constraints someone and does not permit independent action. There is something that forces you to comply with another entity.

# RESOURCE

## How Broad Is the Command to not Be "Unequally Yoked"?

By Randy Alcorn | March 18, 2010



### Question from a reader:

*The "unequally yoked" passage (2 Corinthians 6:14) is usually applied to marriage. What about business associations? How far does it go?*

*Further, what about Ephesians 5:7 which says:*

*"Therefore do not be partners with them"? It is referring to: "Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person —such a man is an idolater— has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God"?*

# YOKE IN MARRIAGE

- 2 Corinthians 6:14 applies to dating and marriage.
- Deuteronomy 7:3-4 - “You shall make no covenant with them . . . you shall not intermarry with them . . . for they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods.”
- Paul further explains why this is important in 2 Corinthians 6:16-17 - we are to be separate.
- Physical intimacy is connected to spiritual unity.

# YOKE IN BUSINESS

- 2 Corinthians 6:14 applies to relationships in which are are yoked (contractually bound).
- Unlike a marriage, business partnerships can be defined contractually. But this would certainly include an “exit strategy” that might include a section with a buy / sell agreement.
- But that does not mean we should walk out over a conflict that doesn't involve a biblical command.

# RESOURCE



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GO BACK

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## Business Partnerships between Christians and Non-Christians

**QUESTION**

Would it be wrong for a **Christian** to go into business with an **unbeliever**? I'm thinking about doing so, but was wondering if it would be a case of being "unequally yoked" (2 Corinthians 6:14)?

**ANSWER**

Let's take a look at the biblical passage that forms the background to your question. In

2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul writes, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" The underlying principle here is that whenever a relationship, be it personal or business, is such that a believer's testimony to Christ's

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