

Living in Two Worlds

(2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

When we become Christians, a radical transformation takes place in our lives. We become new creations in Christ (5:17)! Therefore, believers and unbelievers live in two totally different worlds that cannot be mixed. Christians are to be in the world but not of the world. How does Jesus express this truth in His prayer the night before He is crucified (John 17:15)?

Living in two worlds requires at least *three actions*. First is ...

Avoid being unequally yoked (6:14-16).

Paul specifically writes, *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers* (6:14a). The phrase translated *unequally yoked* means harnessed with different kinds of animals. What does God command in Deuteronomy 22:10?

Obviously, the plow would not pull evenly because the two different animals don't have the same nature or strength. Therefore, both animals would be miserable. In the same way, a believer and an unbeliever have different spiritual desires.

Being *unequally yoked with unbelievers* certainly applies to Christians who date and marry unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:39). In a marriage where one spouse is a Christian and one is not, the believing spouse will have to carry all the spiritual weight. The two spouses will often have opposing morals, priorities, charitable giving concerns, etc.

However, the command to avoid being *unequally yoked* also applies to improper business associations in which a Christian might be influenced to do what is unethical, sinful, or illegal. In addition, the command applies to associations with false religions or false teachers.

To illustrate the prohibition of being *unequally yoked* with unbelievers, Paul asks five rhetorical questions.

Rhetorical question #1: *For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?* (6:14b). The word *lawlessness*, or "unrighteousness," refers to those who willfully and habitually violate God's Law by sinning (1 Jn 3:4).

Righteousness and lawlessness are polar opposites; they have nothing in common and are obviously incompatible.

Rhetorical question #2: *Or what fellowship has light with darkness?* (6:14c). The word translated *fellowship*, or "communion," (KOINONIA, coin-oh-nee'-ah) means "sharing in common." A great example of this word is the group of believers as recorded in the early chapters of *Acts* (Acts 2:42). *Light* refers to spiritual understanding and *darkness* to spiritual ignorance. What does Jesus declare in John 8:12b-d?

Light and *darkness* are also polar opposites because they have nothing in common.

Rhetorical question #3: *What accord has Christ with Belial?* (6:15a). The word *Belial* (Be'-lee-al) is a Greek word and is another name for Satan. The word translated *accord*, or "concord," (SYMPHONESIS, soom-fo '-nay- sis) is the Greek word from which we get our English word "symphony." "Symphony" refers to a musical composition that results from musicians reading their own part of the same music and obeying the same leader or conductor. The Greek word means "a sounding together" or "harmony." It refers to anything characterized by a harmonious combination of elements.

How does John explain the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil (1 John 3:10c-d)?

Being a follower of Christ is more than not doing sinful things. It also involves our attitudes toward others, which includes loving our brothers and sisters in Christ and our neighbors as ourselves. Christ is the Source of love, and Satan is the source of hate. Again, they are polar opposites.

Rhetorical question #4: *Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?* (6:15b). The word translated *portion*, or "part," refers to being a "partner" in some kind of business. Paul is advising us to be careful about entering into partnerships or associations that might compromise our Christian morals.

Rhetorical question #5: *What agreement has the temple of God with idols?* (6:16a). Christianity is incompatible with all forms of false religions, or *idols*, that promise eternal life. As Christians, we are not in agreement with Islam, Buddhism, or any other kind of religion about how to receive eternal life (Jn 14:6).

Paul explains, *For we are the temple of the living God* (6:16b). We are *the temple of the living God* because God's Spirit dwells exclusively in Christians (1 Cor. 3:16).

Paul continues by quoting several Old Testament passages. The first comes from Leviticus 26:11-12, which is a promise God gives the Israelites in the wilderness: *"I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people"* (6:16c-e).

When God brought the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, He wanted them to be His holy people. Therefore, on Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and the instructions for building the tabernacle in the wilderness. He wanted to dwell among them, so they didn't feel He is a faraway God watching them from a distance. The tabernacle was a symbol of His presence among His people.

God's promise to live among His people was partially fulfilled in the earthly body of Christ. How does an angel of the Lord announce the birth of Christ to Joseph (Matthew 1:23)?

However, God always wants to be more personal than just living **among** us; He ultimately wants to live **in** us. He lives in us today in the person of the Holy Spirit; therefore, we *are the temple of the living God*.

To live in two worlds, **avoid being unequally yoked** and ...

Abandon spiritually contaminating influences (6:17-18).

Experiencing God's presence in our lives requires personal holiness. Therefore, Paul paraphrases Isaiah 52:11, which was originally written to Jewish exiles in Babylon. The passage urged them to abandon things associated with pagan worship. However, the principles are eternal, so Paul writes, *"Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord"* (6:17a-b). This is a command to separate ourselves from the immorality that is all around us. Like Israel, we must be *separate* and abandon the spiritually contaminating influences of our culture.

God also says, *"and touch no unclean thing"* (6:17c). Touch refers to coming into contact with anything that is spiritually harmful. What is the result of abandoning **spiritually contaminating influences** of the world (6:17d)?

Next, Paul refers to 2 Samuel 7:14 where God promises David, He will bless his son Solomon. Paul also quotes Isaiah 43:6, and writes, *"and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty"* (6:18). Paul interprets this prophecy as also referring to Christ, and therefore, to believers. Paul is right because what does God command in Isaiah 43:6c-d?

The Jews didn't obey that command when Christ came, so God is fulfilling it today through the church.

To live in two worlds, **avoid being *unequally yoked*, abandon spiritually contaminating influences**, and ...

Appraise the motivation for application (7:1).

Paul now gives us the motivation to apply what he has written about. He begins, *Since we have these promises, beloved (7:1a)*. God's *promises* to welcome us, be with us, and be in us are powerful motivations to **avoid being *unequally yoked* and *abandon spiritually contaminating influences*** in our culture. God promises us an intimate relationship with Him, but we must *cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit (7:1b)*. The word *defilement*, or "filthiness," refers to moral contamination. The *defilement* of the world most often shows up in the way we talk. Therefore, what prohibition is given in Ephesians 5:4a-b?

Obscene stories and dirty jokes are not to be a part of a Christian's life. Instead, we are to focus on *bringing holiness to completion (7:1c)*. This means we are to pursue *holiness* daily by separating ourselves from anything that might defile us. The Bible calls this "sanctification." Another motivation is *the fear of God (7:1d)*. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge and of wisdom (Prov. 1:7 & 9:10)*. This means if we are smart, we will obey God. However, there is more to *the fear of God*. What is it (Proverbs 8:13a)?

As Christians, we must be in the world to fulfill the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20). However, we must not compromise with the world and become defiled.

To live in two worlds, **avoid being *unequally yoked*, abandon spiritually contaminating influences**, and **appraise the motivation for application**.