



First Baptist Church At The Villages

COMPANION STUDY TO MESSAGE: CONFIDENCE THROUGH GOD'S PRESENCE (5/24) •
STUDY TITLE: THE NEW HAS COME • 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18; 7:1 • 5/24/2020

MAIN POINT

As recipients of the New Covenant, we must not allow ourselves to become attached to this world.

INTRODUCTION

As your study time begins, use this section to focus your mind and your heart on the topic of the lesson.

Name two things that go together (i.e., peanut butter and jelly, cereal and milk, cell phones and Wi-Fi).

Name two things that do not go together (i.e., cereal and orange juice, ice cream and broccoli, chewing gum and peanuts, flip flops and cross country skiing).

In today's passage, Paul identified two things that don't go together. If you grew up in the church being taught about what it means to be "unequally yoked," you're probably remembering youth group summer camps where the passage we're going to study today was used to drive home one point and one point only: don't date non-Christians. But Paul had more in mind than that. His desire for the Corinthians and God's desire for us is unadulterated affection.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18 AND 7:1

A “yoke” is defined as a wooden bar or frame by which two draft animals are joined at the heads or necks for working together. In Deuteronomy 22:10, the law prohibited a person to plow with a calf and a donkey together, as the calf was considered clean and the donkey unclean. Also, these mismatched animals would pull the yoke in differing ways and with differing force.

Its been said, “We don’t want to be tied to another person in such a way where their direction in life holds power over God’s calling in our life.” What might this look like in our lives?

While Paul was not explicit about the types of relationships this applies to, what types do you think he had in mind here?

How might being in a deep relationship with an unbeliever make it difficult to follow Christ at times?

Why can we not bear both the sacred and the sacrilegious at the same time? How do we attempt to? What are the consequences?

The verses from 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1 are often framed in a way that highlights the negative: don’t be unequally yoked, don’t touch anything unclean, don’t get contaminated by all that sin “out there,” come out (from all the fun). While some clear “negatives” are present, actually the context is for an entirely positive purpose. We shouldn’t miss the love and relationship here.

Usually we have seen the command to not be unequally yoked in a negative light, but in reality, it’s very positive. How is this so?

What does God being a 'Father' mean to you?

Paul said that we are the temple of the living God. This verse has major implications for our relationships. What are they?

In verse 17, Paul quoted from the prophet Isaiah, who at the time was proclaiming freedom for the Israelites from the pagan city of Babylon. Summarizing this string of Old Testament references, Paul referenced Israel’s history that had flowed into the present. God no longer dwells in temples made by hands, but in our hearts! He lives among us, and we’re His people.

****As a result of these promises, what are we urged to do (7:1)?**

CONTEMPLATION & APPLICATION

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to your life.

Do a quick evaluation—is your lifestyle and the things you value markedly different than what’s important in our current culture? Explain.

When it comes to your being separate from what the world desires and prizes, do you look at the prospect as a burden or a joy? Explain.

How would you counsel someone already bound to someone through marriage or a contract who’s not a believer? How would you counsel someone unequally yoked but not bound through marriage or a contract?

What are some practical steps we can take to engage with unbelievers and make disciples as God calls us, and at the same time keep ourselves from being tied to them in the way Paul warned against in this passage?

PRAYER

Thank God for your identity in Christ—that you are His and He is yours. Ask Him to convict you about any relationships that are leading to unfaithfulness to Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you as you pursue holiness and faithfulness to God this week.

COMMENTARY (additional background and/or explanation of the verses to help in understanding the

biblical text)

| 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1

6:14a. Paul’s difficult instruction was that believers should not be yoked together with unbelievers. The NIV translation obscures the meaning of the original language. Paul insisted that believers should not be “unequally yoked” (NKJV) or “mismatched” (NRSV). Paul probably alluded to Deuteronomy 22:10, which prohibited the yoking together of oxen and donkeys. Like many other Mosaic laws which may seem odd to us today, this prohibition taught Israel through symbolism that they were to remain pure by separating themselves from the surrounding Gentile nations. Paul used this law in much the same way here.

It is common for Christians to apply Paul’s instruction here to marriages and close business associations between believers and unbelievers. Paul taught against marrying outside the faith, and wisdom should be exercised in all business relationships. Yet, in this passage Paul focused on all associations with unbelievers that led to infidelity to Christ, particularly by involvement with pagan rituals and idol worship. Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to separate themselves from these practices.

6:14b. The first question raised the issue of what righteousness and wickedness have in common. Paul did not speak here of righteous and wicked people, but of righteousness and wickedness as abstract principles. He did this to make the answer to his question as obvious as possible. In abstraction, righteousness and wickedness have nothing in common.

We must be careful not to read our prejudices into Paul's words here. Although Paul spoke of believers as the "righteousness of God" (5:21) because of Christ's substitutionary death, he knew that believers did not demonstrate this righteousness in their lives in a perfect way.

6:14c. Paul's second question focused on fellowship between light and darkness. In Paul's writings "fellowship" (koinonia) frequently describes believers' spiritual union with Christ and the consequent union that believers share with one another in Christ. It is clear from this expression that Paul had in mind religious and spiritual connections between believers and unbelievers, not natural or social connections.

The New Testament frequently speaks of believers in association with the light of Christ. By contrast, unbelievers remain in the darkness of sin. Here Paul argues from an analogy in nature that just as light and darkness are opposites, so Christians and non-Christians are spiritual opposites.

6:15a. The apostle's third question concerned the absence of harmony ... between Christ and Belial. As the English translation "harmony" suggests, Paul used a musical metaphor (symphonesis). He expected the Corinthians to remember that only cacophony occurred between believers and unbelievers in religious matters. The term Belial (Beliar) appears in a number of intertestamental writings as a personification of Satan, the chief of evil spirits. Paul spoke here of Christ and Satan as metonymies of believers and unbelievers. In principle, believers and unbelievers should have no more in common than Christ and Satan.

6:15b. Up to this point Paul had spoken abstractly and metaphorically, but here he spoke openly about a believer and an unbeliever, saying that they have no part with one another. Again, the context makes it plain that Paul had in mind the religious and spiritual incompatibility of believers and unbelievers, not normal social contacts.

6:16–18. Paul turned to speak of believers and unbelievers as the temple of God and the temple of ... idols. This manner of speaking summed up Paul's outlooks so well that he elaborated on it for the next two verses. His lengthy attention to this matter suggests that his chief concern throughout this passage was the Corinthians' involvement in pagan idolatry.

Paul first clarified that believers are the temple of the living God. The Old Testament speaks of the God of Israel as the living God because he is active and responsive to his people. God differs dramatically from the dead idols of paganism that can do nothing. The fact that believers are the temple of the living God as opposed to that of idols demonstrates why believers must remain separate from the practices of idolatry.

To fill out his assertion, Paul grouped together several Old Testament passages that illustrated the intimate involvement between the living God and his people. He first alluded to Exodus 25:8 and 29:45 where God said, I will live with them. The living God does not remain distant from his people. He is personally present among them, thus making the people themselves the temple of God.

7:1. In light of the promises given to the church as the temple of God, followers of Christ have a responsibility, which Paul cast in terms of temple cleansing rituals. Paul insisted that the Corinthian believers purify themselves from everything that contaminates. The tabernacle instructions of Exodus 30:20–21 are evidently in view here. In the Old Testament, ritual washings symbolized the repentance and recommitment of worshipers. Paul applied this principle to the Christian life. Although the ritual washings themselves were not to be observed in the New Testament, the inward reality that they symbolized was to be observed.

Note that Paul mentioned everything. No defilement is acceptable in the Christian life, however small it may be. In fact, Paul had in mind both body and spirit. Paul probably mentioned the body in light of his discussion of the temptation to religious prostitution. Corinth was full of opportunities for fleshly defilement that led to the defilement of the inner person. Behavior is not just external; it corrupts the spirit of a person as well. Neither the behavior of the body nor the condition of the spirit should be overlooked by believers.

What is the goal of this cleansing through repentance and renewal? It is to perfect holiness. Holiness or separation from the world is a condition given to true believers when they place their faith in Christ. This holiness is the goal of daily living.

The motivation behind the pursuit of holiness is reverence for God. Paul reflected the Old Testament teaching that the fear of God is essential to proper living. The term fear (phobos, phobeo/phobeomai), like its Old Testament Hebrew counterpart, may have connotations of dread and repulsion, but it may also have the more positive connotations of proper respect and reverence. The latter sense is in view here.

The manifold sins of the Corinthian church made it clear that they did not recognize the danger in which they placed themselves. They needed to reconsider how the God of Scriptures is not to

be ignored. They still faced the danger of proving themselves never to have been regenerated and thus headed toward the judgment of God.