

# Separate Together

---

**Sunday, September 14, 2025**

*Start with Application Testimony*

- **Last week's exhortation:** Be courageous – begin to open your heart wider to your brothers and sisters in the church.

## INTRO

- **We are going verse-by-verse, in a topical study through I & II Corinthians**
  - **Current Topic:** Church Relationship – The holy work of being the Body of Christ.
    - We have been learning about the function and design of the church, and how God uses us to bless, grow, and challenge one another with the aim of making us all more like Christ.
    - Today's passage is meant to be a challenge. Paul draws a sharp line between life in Christ and life in 'the world.'
      - In Scripture, 'the world' does not mean people, but the system of values and priorities that rejects God and resists His rule.
      - Today's lesson may offend some of us, because it will expose compromise and call for separation from things we may want to hold onto. But we have to remember that some partnerships (like our partnership in Christ) exclude other partnerships.

# READ

## 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 CSB

<sup>14</sup> Do not be yoked together with those who do not believe. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? <sup>15</sup> What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, as God said: **I will dwell and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.** <sup>17</sup> Therefore, **come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you.** <sup>18</sup> And **I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.** <sup>1</sup> So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

# EXAMINE

## #1 | Jesus has made a division between us who believe and those who do not

### 1. **We belong to Christ, making us immediately incompatible with everything that contradicts Him**

- a. 2 Corinthians 6:14–15 “...what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial [a.k.a. Satan]?...”

- i. We can't have it all or play both sides of the fence. Accepting Christ means rejecting everything that rejects Him. (John 15:19, 1 John 2:15)
- ii. Jesus warned his disciples early on that following Him would bring division between them and even their closest family members. (Matthew 10:32-39)

## **2. We must awaken to the distinctions between Christ and the world**

- a. 1 John 1:5-6 *"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him. If we say, "We have fellowship with him," and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth."*
- i. Christ and the world are as incompatible as light and darkness. The idea that we can have both, is a lie from Satan going all the way back to Genesis 3.

## **#2 | Our lives must reflect this distinction, not contradict it**

### **1. Christ has made us holy, but we must continue in holiness**

- a. 2 Corinthians 7:1 *"...since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God."*
- i. Since God has set us apart (a.k.a. made us holy) our gratitude for His work and sobriety about the dangers of rebelling against it, should motivate our obedience and faithfulness to Him. (Romans 6:1-2; Philippians 2:12-13)

### **2. We can't pursue holiness and also reserve a few sinful things for ourselves**

- a. 2 Corinthians 6:16–17 “...what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God... Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you.”
  - i. We cannot combine following Christ and willfully continuing in any sin. If we attempt this compromise, we will find ourselves outside of Christ entirely. (Revelation 3:16)

### **#3 | We can only truly partner with others in the Church**

#### **1. Don't connect with unbelievers better than with brothers and sisters in the Church**

- a. 2 Corinthians 6:14–15 “Do not be yoked together with those who do not believe... what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?”
  - i. The image of the yoke is a peer-partnership which isn't truly possible between a person who is in Christ and a person who is not.
    - 1. Remember, Paul isn't encouraging isolationism (1 Cor 5:9–10).
      - a. *We should be building relationships with unbelievers, but always with the aim of introducing them to Christ. (Colossians 4:5–6; Ephesians 5:7,11)*
  - ii. Our partnerships must be making us more like Christ and building the Kingdom of God – unbelievers cannot do that. All they can do is pull us in the opposite direction.
    - 1. It can feel easier to partner with unbelievers, than with believers – but that's because partnering with unbelievers doesn't require you to become more like Christ.

## 2. **Your greatest opportunity for true companionship is with brothers and sisters in the family of God**

- a. 2 Corinthians 6:18 “...I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”
- b. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 “Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. 10 For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.”
  - i. Only brothers and sisters in Christ can provide the support that we need to thrive in Christ and partner in the work of His calling on our lives.
    1. God can use anyone to give wisdom for a moment, but good brothers and sisters in the Church are uniquely positioned and equipped to partner with us in the journey. (Ephesians 4:10–16)

## **REFLECT**

### ***Let's take a moment to pray***

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our attention and lead our conversation, helping us see and understand what He wants us to apply in our lives.

## **APPLY**

### **Process the passage together with these questions:**

- Paul warns against being “unequally yoked” with unbelievers. What kinds of partnerships do you think he’s talking about?
- Why is it sometimes easier to connect with unbelievers than with other Christians? Have you ever felt that tension?

- Can you think of a time when another believer lifted you up when you were struggling? What did that show you about God's design for the Church family?

### **Where we want to “land the plane”**

- God has made us His temple and given us a family in the Church, so our deepest bonds should be here, not outside. If we chase after relationships in the world while neglecting the brothers and sisters God has placed beside us, we'll end up yoked to voices that pull us away from Christ. But when we invest in one another, we find true companionship and strength to walk in holiness together as sons and daughters of the living God.

### **Exhortation for the Week**

- Identify a lingering partnership you have with the world, and break it this week.

## **FOOTNOTES**

1. **The social function of this passage** was the same as its predecessors in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, namely to create a stronger sense of what the proper moral and social boundaries were for the Christian community in Corinth. There were entangling alliances from which the Corinthians needed to disengage themselves in order to be fully reconciled to Paul and the One who sent him. These alliances involved koinōnia with nonbelievers in pagan temples and, worse, involvement with false believers, the latter not addressed directly until chs. 10–13. Some partnerships exclude others, and the Corinthians needed to understand this because their relationship not only with Paul but also with Christ hung in the balance. This passage shows Paul going on the attack, though in a deliberative mode, and as such it

serves his larger goals in this discourse of defending his own integrity and that of his work in Corinth, with hopes of a full rapprochement with his converts. He longs for full partnership in the gospel with them again. *Ben Witherington III, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 406.