

Week 4

Isaac & Rebekah: Unbelievers are Not an Option

(Genesis 24:3-4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

We're in the third week of a series called "Chasing Love" and in this series we're learning how to navigate **Singleness, Dating, Relationships & Sex in a Confused Culture.**

And last week, we began looking at the story of a young couple who did things right when it comes to relationships. So, we're taking their story a few verses at a time and learning from their success.

And last week, we learned two big takeaways from verses 1-4...

- 1) **Focus on running your *race* rather than finding a *relationship*.**
- 2) **Focus on *being* the right person rather than *finding* the right person.**

And I told you that while you're running your race (chasing hard after God), there will be others who are chasing after God also. Remember, Paul told young Timothy, "Pursue righteousness, *along with those* who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Tim 2:22). And as you're running along with those people, you'll eventually notice someone who is running at the same pace as you, in the same direction as you, pursuing Jesus right alongside you. And when you least expect it, you'll find someone to run with for the rest of your life.



But why is it so important that you don't grab onto a person who is NOT running in the same direction as you? In other words, why is God so adamant that a follower of Christ doesn't date or marry an unsaved person?

That's what we're about to find out tonight. Look at verses 3-4 again...

Abraham says, to his most trusted servant, "**Swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, ⁴ but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.**"

What's going on here? Is Abraham a racist? No. This is not about *race*, it's about *faith*. You see, the Canaanites believed in multiple gods, and they refused to surrender their lives to the true God of heaven.

So, Abraham's first and most important criteria is that his son marry a follower of the one true God, and this type of woman could be found among Abraham's people back in his home country, over 500 miles away.

You see, God's desire has always been (and always will be) that a believer *only* enters a relationship with another believer. And Paul is going to show us exactly why...

2 Corinthians 6:14–18 ***“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial [a name associated with Satan]? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”***

Paul is saying the same thing that Abraham was saying – only Paul is going to show us exactly why it's so vital that a saved person should only enter a relationship and ultimately marry another saved person. First, because...

1. Believers and unbelievers are total opposites.

2 Corinthians 6:14a ***“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers...”***

The term “unequally yoked” or “bound together” comes from Deuteronomy 22:10 where God told the Israelites not to yoke an ox and a mule together to plow a field.

It sounds funny but Paul (and Jesus) used this real-life illustration to make a point about relationships. You see, these two animals are total opposites – they have two entirely different natures. In fact, their speed, strength, size, response, and even their steps would *all* be different and work against each other. These two animals are total opposites!

And God uses this illustration throughout the Bible because a Christian and a non-Christian are total opposites as well...

- **They have two different natures.** The unsaved person has a sin nature that is controlled by their own sinful cravings and they follow the ways/opinions of the world. The saved person has a new nature that is controlled by the Holy Spirit and they follow the teachings in the Bible – though they still fight against remnants of the old nature (Galatians 5:16-24).
- **They live in (and are destined for) two different kingdoms.** You're may thinking, "What do you mean two different kingdoms; we're all sitting right here together in the same room." But the truth is, there are two vastly different kingdoms represented in this very room (assuming there are believers and unbelievers).

And Paul uses five phrases to show the stark contrast between these two kingdoms...

2 Corinthians 6:14b–16a "For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God..."

You see, there is a stark spiritual difference between those who are saved and those who are not. Notice the five dividing lines...

- 1) **Righteousness & Lawlessness** (vs.14) – The saved person loves God's Law and desires to obey it, but the unsaved person ignores, resents and rejects God's Law.
- 2) **Light & Darkness** (vs.14) – Over and over the Bible describes God's Kingdom as a Kingdom of Light and Satan's kingdom as a kingdom of darkness. And the Bible is clear that Light and darkness cannot be joined together because Light *drives out* darkness (John 3). So, either the Light of Christ in you will drive away the unbeliever you're dating, or the unbeliever will cause you to hide your Light and grow cold in your love for Jesus.

John 3:19–21 "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked

things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

- 3) **Christ & Satan (Belial)** (vs.15) – Jesus and Satan are *never* going to tolerate each other. They will never be joined (yoked) together and therefore, neither should the believer and unbeliever!
- 4) **Faith & Unbelief (believer/unbeliever)** (vs.15) – The true Christian has faith in the God of heaven who has clearly revealed Himself in the Bible. But an unbeliever refuses to trust God by faith. They will say, “I know the Bible says this... BUT.”
- 5) **The Temple of God & Idols** (vs.16) – The believer has God living inside them (they are the temple of God), but the unbeliever is completely void and empty of the Spirit of God. And rather than worshipping Christ, the unbeliever gives their time, attention, and affection to “idols” (money, success, career, popularity, fame, pleasure, etc.).

As a Christian, do really want to join yourself with someone who...

- Rejects God’s Word and refuses to obey it?
- Causes you to hide your Light and grow cold in your love for Christ?
- Refuses to walk by faith and trust the true God who has revealed Himself in the Bible?
- Will not worship Christ, but constantly chases fulfillment in idols?

How could you possibly bring these opposite kingdoms together and expect it to be successful? When a saved person dates and ultimately marries an unsaved person, it sets up an impossible situation.¹ They are living in (and destined for) two entirely different eternities!

Which leads us to Paul’s second point...

2. Believers and unbelievers have nothing meaningful and lasting in common.

Now Paul takes it even farther. He now uses five key words to show how a

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 652). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

believer and an unbeliever have nothing meaningful and lasting in common...

- 1) **No meaningful & lasting “Partnership”** (vs.14) – which means to share something between each other. For example, two believers...
 - Share the same experience of having your sins forgiven and having a relationship with Christ.
 - You share the same Holy Spirit who lives within you.
 - You share the same purpose in life – to know Christ and make Him known.
 - You share the same beliefs/worldview because you both submit yourselves to the authority of God’s Word.
But you CANNOT have a partnership like this if you date or marry an unbeliever.
- 2) **No meaningful & lasting “Fellowship”** (vs.14) – This word describes a close personal connection between two Christians, but also with the rest of the family of God. An unbeliever has NO fellowship with the family of God.
- 3) **No meaningful & lasting “Accord”** (vs.15) – We get our English word “symphony” from this word (*symphonesis*) and it describes beautiful music that comes together when all the players are reading the same sheet music, following the same conductor as he controls the direction and tempo of the music. A believer and an unbeliever are NOT reading from the same sheet (Bible) and they’re not following the same Conductor (Jesus)!
- 4) **No meaningful & lasting “Portion/Inheritance”** (vs.15) – The believer’s inheritance is eternal life in heaven with Christ, but the unbeliever’s inheritance is eternal punishment in hell with Satan. A believer and an unbeliever will receive two totally different inheritances when they die. Do you really want to spend your entire earthly life with someone that you will NEVER see in eternity?
- 5) **No meaningful & lasting “Agreement”** (vs.16) – Amos 3:3 (NKJV) says, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”

From my counseling experience with couples who are “unequally yoked,” they often find it difficult to agree on things. For example...

- The believer is constantly concerned about the soul of their unsaved spouse, but the unsaved person has little/no interest.
- The unbeliever won't come to church consistently, which causes tension within the family.
- They can't agree on what is appropriate when it comes to music, movies, the language they use, and even within their sex life.
- They become a "house divided" on issues like tithing and how they discipline their children (Luke 11:17).

And Abraham understood these things, which is why he told his servant: Isaac must not choose a wife from among unbelievers, which leads us to our final point...

3. Believers must separate themselves from unbelievers.

2 Corinthians 6:17–18 “Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

Let me clarify some things in these verses...

- **When God tells you to separate yourself from unbelievers, He's NOT talking about everyday interaction.** Christians are to be *separated* not *isolated* from the world. Jesus said that His disciples are to be IN the world, but not OF the world. Jesus Himself was "separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26), and yet He was still "a friend of sinners" (Luke 7:34).
- **God tells us that WE have to "go out from their midst and be separate from them."** In other words, it must be voluntary. God is not going to *drive* you out from a dating relationship with an unbeliever. You must separate yourself voluntarily.²

And your thoughts will automatically go to what you're *losing* instead of what you're *gaining*. But it's not just about walking *away* from someone (the person you're dating); it's also about walking *toward* someone (God). We have to separate *from* sin and *into* a right relationship with God.³

- **God is not telling a married believer to divorce their unsaved**

² Exell, J. S. (n.d.). *The Biblical Illustrator: Second Corinthians* (p. 345). New York; Chicago; Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 652). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

spouse. In fact, Paul gives clear instructions that the saved spouse is to remain married and pray for the salvation of their unsaved spouse and live a Christ-honoring life in front of that unbelieving spouse. However, if the unbelieving spouse dies or pursues a divorce, the saved spouse is free from that marriage (1 Cor. 7:15).



So, if God only allows you to date/marry a Christian, will ANY Christian do? That's what we'll learn next week as we move forward with Isaac and Rebekah's story!

Small Groups