

# Dare to Be Different

## Scripture Focus

2 Corinthians 6:11–7:1

## Summary

The Corinthian believers had opened their fellowship to false teachers but had given Paul the cold shoulder. Paul expressed his love for the Corinthians and encouraged them to open their hearts to him. True fellowship exists among believers who honor God by leading pure lives and by separating from false religious teachers.

## Topic

Fellowship with God

## Theme

Christian fellowship requires a right relationship with God and His Word.

## Desired Learner Response

The learner will understand the Biblical basis for separation and seek intimate fellowship with God.

## Materials

- Resources 1 and 8

## Outline

### I. Fellowship with Believers (2 Cor. 6:11–13)

- A. Paul's openness (6:11, 12)
- B. Paul's plea (6:12, 13)

### II. Avoid Partnerships with Unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14–17)

- A. The inevitable compromise (6:14)
- B. The obvious contrasts (6:14–16)
- C. The practical implications (6:14–16)
  1. Religious alliances
  2. Dating and marriage
  3. Business partnerships
- D. The clear command (6:17)

### III. God's Promises to Separated Believers (2 Cor. 6:16–7:1)

- A. The promises (6:16–18)
- B. The response (7:1)

## Memory Verse

*"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).*

## GETTING STARTED

Use the following activities to focus your learners' interest on separating from all systems of false religion and all forms of evil philosophy and behavior.

### Tolerance for Sin

**ASK:** Which is more loving: tolerance or intolerance of sinful behavior? *Intolerance.*

**ASK:** Which one does the world say is more loving? *Tolerance.*

Tolerating sin encourages the sinner to remain under God's coming wrath against his sin. Intolerance for sin provides hope to escape God's wrath. Paul called on believers to refrain from joining sinners in their sinful behavior. Separating from sin shows our love for the sinner. It offers them hope and points them to Christ.

### Tolerance v. Truth

**ASK:** Between tolerance and truth, which one is being held up as more important by the world today? (Q1) *The world in general values tolerance over truth.*

**ASK:** What intolerance of Christians have you observed recently? (Q2)

The world seems to tolerate everything but Christianity's views of sin and salvation. They decry Christianity as being based on hateful intolerance. The world fails to see that love motivates Christians to share the truth the world desperately needs.

Paul challenged the Corinthians to guard their associations with the world. All believers must live differently from the world if they hope to reach the world for Christ.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

In 2 Corinthians 6:11–7:1, Paul stressed the church's need to be different—to practice Biblical separation. He challenged the Corinthian church to fellowship only with those who genuinely believed in Christ and adhered to Scriptural truth.

### I. Fellowship with Believers (2 Cor. 6:11–13)

Paul loved the Corinthian believers. He had confronted their city's paganism when he preached the gospel in Corinth, and he had witnessed the birth of the Corinthian church.

#### A. Paul's openness (6:11, 12)

Paul's yearning for the Corinthian Christians is clear in the opening words of verse 11: *O ye Corinthians*. He wanted to get through to them—to break down the barrier they had erected between themselves and him, their founding pastor. He wrote that he had spoken openly and candidly to them.



**READ:** 2 Corinthians 6:11, 2a. **ASK:** How did Paul communicate his love for the Corinthian believers? (*Not straitened in us means not restricted by us.*) (Q3) *He told them of his unrestricted openness in word and in heart.*

Paul wrote that *our heart is enlarged* (6:11). His heart was wide open to the Corinthians. Moreover, he did not hedge them in; he did not constrain them. Openness in a relationship is a two-sided quality in which both parties must respond. If one party is open but the other is not, the relationship cannot blossom.

### **B. Paul's plea (6:12, 13)**

Paul then put his finger on a communications problem: *Ye are straitened in your own bowels* (6:12); that is, you are restricted by your own affections. Paul loved the Corinthian Christians, but they were withholding their love from him.

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 6:13. **ASK:** How did Paul want the Corinthian believers to respond to his affection for them? (Q4) *He wanted them to be as open and receptive of him as he was with them.*

In effect Paul challenged the Corinthians to reciprocate by opening their hearts wide to him. They had been shutting him out of their hearts. They had let suspicions planted by impostors squeeze out their loyalty to him and their love for him.

**ASK:** What strengthens the bonds among believers today? (Q5) *Serving together, praying together, caring for one another, and open sharing.*

**ASK:** What causes believers in a church to drift apart? (Q6) *Gossip, unforgiving spirit, bitterness, isolation, and superficiality.*

## **II. Avoid Partnerships with Unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14–17)**

While shutting Paul out, the Corinthians had been opening their church to false teachers. So in the rest of chapter 6, Paul presented the believer's obligation to separate from apostates.

### **A. The inevitable compromise (6:14)**

Paul commanded, *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers* (6:14). The Greek text signifies, *Stop becoming unequally yoked*. The Corinthian church was already linking hands and hearts with false teachers.

Believers and unbelievers hold mutually exclusive goals and serve different masters. They cannot peacefully coexist in a compromising relationship. They cannot be yoked together without compromise. A believer and an unbeliever have different goals and serve different masters. As a result, they walk differently. The unbeliever follows Satan's lead, whereas the believer follows the Holy Spirit's leading.

### **B. The obvious contrasts (6:14–16)**

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 6:14–16. **ASK:** What five contrasts did Paul cite? (Q7) *Righteousness and unrighteousness; light and darkness; Christ and Belial; believer and unbeliever; temple of God and idols.*

**READ:** Matthew 11:29. **ASK:** What yoke should believers carry? (Q8) *Christ's yoke.*

First, Paul objected to an unequal yoke on the basis that righteousness and unrighteousness are mutually exclusive (6:14). He asked, *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?* This question and the other four in this section are rhetorical. They expect a negative answer: none. *Fellowship* speaks of sharing, of having things in common. The word for unrighteousness describes lawlessness—open rebellion against God. There is absolutely no basis for a spiritual partnership between the righteous and the unrighteous.

Second, Paul objected to an unequal yoke on the basis that light and darkness are mutually exclusive. He asked, *What communion hath light with darkness?* (6:14). *Communion* speaks of fellowship. Light and darkness are often used in the Bible to speak of good and evil. Godliness and iniquity have nothing in common.

Third, Paul asked, *What concord hath Christ with Belial?* (6:15). *Concord* translates a word that conveys the meaning of sounding alike or speaking in harmony. Our English word *symphony* is a transliteration of this Greek word. In the Old Testament period a *son of Belial* was a worthless person, a degenerate. In the New Testament period the term was applied to Satan. Paul asked in effect, *What harmony is there between Christ and Satan?* The answer of course is none.

Fourth, Paul objected to an unequal yoke on the basis that a believer and an unbeliever are mutually exclusive. *What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?* (6:15). Again, the answer is none.

Paul's fifth objection to an unequal yoke was based on the fact that the temple of God and idols are mutually exclusive. *What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?* Two Greek words are used for *temple*. The one Paul used in verse 16 signified the temple's inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. It is inconceivable that the Holy of Holies would have anything in common with idols.

Christians and unbelievers do not have a spiritual partnership, and it is unscriptural to try to form one. A Christian ought to love the unsaved and try to win them to Christ, but he or she has no spiritual union with them.

### **C. The practical implications (6:14–16)**

#### **1. Religious alliances**

What does this prohibition against being unequally yoked cover? According to the context of 2 Corinthians 6:14–16, it covers inappropriate religious alliances. God's redeemed people are *the temple of the living God* (6:16). However, unbelievers honor Belial, or Satan (6:15). Paul insisted in this passage that the two contrasting groups cannot coexist peacefully because Christ has no concord with the Devil. It is logical, then, to conclude that the doctrines of Christ and the doctrines of the Devil are mutually exclusive. Despite the assertion that doctrine isn't important, it is extremely important and worth preserving and propagating. It is better to believe right and enjoy Christ's approval than to discard Biblical doctrine and gain the approval of religious apostates.

**ASK:** How comfortable are you with calling the following teachings wicked?



- The Bible is a fallible book written by men who communicated their religious experiences.
- God saves all who sincerely try to lead good lives.
- Jesus was a truly good man, but He was not the Son of God.
- Jesus arose from the grave only in the sense that He lives on in the good deeds of His followers.
- We must put aside our religious differences and cooperate to build a better world.
- Hell doesn't exist. God would never punish human beings in such a place.

The doctrinal beliefs that are foundational to Biblical Christianity are often called the fundamentals of the faith. They include the inspiration of Scripture, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, His sinless life, His vicarious death, and His bodily resurrection. These fundamentals are critical to the Bible's message. We must make sure future generations of believers understand how important it is to adhere to these beliefs.

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 8. **ASK:** What excuses do people or churches give for not separating from religious apostates? (Q9) (Record learners' answers on the upper-left third of the resource.) *We are all serving the same God; we are building community relationships; we don't want to offend anyone.*

**ASK:** What are consequences of not separating from apostates? (Q10) (Record learners' answers on the bottom left third of the resource.) *Undermine the truth; generations to come will leave the faith; testimony is weakened.*

## 2. Dating and marriage

The unequal yoke extends to marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. Christian parents should teach their children that two cannot walk together unless they agree (Amos 3:3), and parents should pray that each of their children will marry only a believer.

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 8. **ASK:** What excuses might people give for not practicing separation in dating and marriage? (Q11) (Record learners' answers on the upper middle third of the resource.) *I am trying to win him or her to Christ; he or she is a good person; I don't know any Christians my age; I don't plan to marry him or her.*

**ASK:** What are consequences of not separating from unbelievers in dating and marriage relationships? (Q12) (Record learners' answers on the bottom middle third of the resource.) *Compromise in other areas of life; shallow relationship; disagreements over how to raise children.*

## 3. Business partnerships

Some Christians believe the command not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers rules out having a business partnership with an unbeliever. Oth-

SEPARATION 2 Corinthians 6:14		
Religious Apostates	Dating and Marriage	Business
Excuses		
Consequences		

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er Christians disagree, but we must recognize that in a joint business venture, the believer might be pressured to compromise his or her moral and ethical standards.

**ASK:** If you wanted to launch a business and a resourceful unbeliever wanted to be your business partner, what decision would you make? Why? (Q13)

God does not want believers to knowingly partner in a business venture that manufactures or sells products that clearly violate Scripture (e.g., pornography, alcoholic beverages). Nor does God want a believer to form a business partnership that would require him or her to sin to keep the partnership bond.

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 8. **ASK:** What excuses might people give for entering a compromising business deal? (Q14) (Record learners' answers on the upper right third of the resource.) *I have no other options; I will be able to give more money to the Lord's work.*

**ASK:** What are consequences of entering a compromising business deal? (Q15) (Record learners' answers on the bottom right third of the resource.) *Compromise in other areas of life; testimony is hampered.*

SEPARATION 2 Corinthians 6:14		
Excess	Religious Apostates	Dating and Marriage
Consequences	Business	

### D. The clear command (6:17)

Paul made it clear that trying to reform from within—whether in an apostate church, a dating relationship, or a compromising business partnership—is not God's plan (6:17). God does not call us to join hands with evil associations so we might have a chance to reform them.

**ASK:** Did you leave an apostate church or denomination? If so, what persuaded you to leave? (Q16)

**ASK:** What counsel would you give those who believe they should stay in an apostate church and try to salvage it? (Q17)

## III. God's Promises to Separated Believers (2 Cor. 6:16—7:1)

### A. The promises (6:16–18)

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 6:16–18.

Separation is not about losing opportunities or settling for second best. Separation is always the best choice a Christian can make. God made three promises to those who practice separation: He will dwell in our midst and be our God (6:16), He will receive us (6:17), and He will be our Father (6:18). Clearly our salvation is not conditioned upon our separating from apostasy, but if we want to be aware of God's presence, approval, and power, we need to separate ourselves unto Him and from unholy partnerships.

### B. The response (7:1)



God also holds us accountable for the purity of our personal lives. It is meaningless to separate from unholy alliances if our lives are full of sin.

**ASK:** What should believers do in consideration of the promises God gives to those who practice separation? (Q18) *Put away sin and strive for holiness in the fear of God.*

**ASK:** Why is the fear of God a motivation for separation? (Q19) *God loves His children too much to let them continue in sin. His love moves Him to chasten those who refuse to separate from sin.*

We should lead clean lives. We should strive to be holy because we reverence God and respect His desire that we be separated unto Him. As we separate ourselves unto Him, our lives will reflect His holiness.

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

Use the following activities to help your learners apply the principle of separation to their lives.

### Hold the Bugs, Please

List the following items on the whiteboard: lettuce, tomatoes, worms, roaches, spiders, lean turkey breast, cheese, wheat bread. Ask the learners what they would not include from the list if they were preparing a sandwich. Explain that they would apply the principle of separation and refuse to eat worms, spiders, and roaches. Similarly, for the good of our spiritual health, we must exclude harmful religious teachings, sinful alliances, and personal sin.

**ASK:** What should [cleansing] ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (7:1) look like in your everyday life? (Q20)

### Personal Inventory

**ASK:** What changes do you need to make to practice personal separation from sin? (Q21) (Have the learners consider the degree of fellowship they enjoy with God.)

**ASK:** How can you separate yourself unto your Heavenly Father in such a way that you enjoy an intimate fellowship with Him? (Q22)

### Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: By God's grace I can separate from sin and apostasy.

Encourage your learners to memorize 2 Corinthians 6:14. Give them an opportunity to quote the verse in class next week.

Waves of Grace	
By God's grace I can ...	7.
1.	8.
2.	9.
3.	10.
4.	11.
5.	12.
6.	13.

# Repentance Brings Relief

## Topic

Confrontation and repentance

## Theme

Biblical confrontation and true repentance are vital parts of a believer's spiritual life.

## Desired Learner Response

The learner will practice true repentance and loving confrontation.

## Materials

- Resources 1, 9, and 10

## Scripture Focus

2 Corinthians 7:2–16

## Overview

In this lesson we discover Paul's model for confronting believers and the essence and results of true repentance.

## Outline

### I. The Confronter (2 Cor. 7:2–9)

- A. Genuine life (7:2)
- B. Genuine love (7:3)
- C. Guarded lips (7:8, 9)

### II. The Confronted (2 Cor. 7:9–11)

- A. Genuine sorrow (7:9, 10)
- B. Genuine repentance (7:11)

### III. The Consequences (2 Cor. 7:12–16)

- A. Care is shown (7:12)
- B. Comfort is shared (7:13)
- C. Confidence is stated (7:14–16)

## Memory Verse

*"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).*