

Relationships

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

Preface

Life begins and ends with relationships. We begin as helpless babies completely dependent on others for our very existence. Later as children and teens, we thrive on making friends, being accepted and having fun with others.

As adults we fall in love and take the concept of a relationship to a whole new level. We strive for a close loving relationship with our spouse and with our own children. As we grow older, relationships continue to be ever so important. Once again we find our self depending on others for assistance and love.

Relationships are an important part of each of our lives. Those with whom we establish relationships have a huge impact on the person we become. God's word has some clear instruction for Christians as it relates to relationships.

Scripture

¹⁴Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵What harmony is there between Christ and Belial (lawless / Satan)^a? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."^b

¹⁷"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord.

Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."^c

¹⁸"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 NIV

Introduction

Many of our problems in life are the result of bad relationships. As humans often make emotional impulse decisions that have lasting consequences.

Every day, marriages fail, business partnerships dissolve and friendships become broken. Why? Most often the answer is that they were destined for failure before they ever began.

God's word tells us as believers we must choose other believers in establishing relationships. We must very cautious when deciding who we will "run with" and spend our time with.

Content

1. The Instruction

Illus: Get volunteers consisting of old man and young man. Place a homemade yoke around the two and ask about how this is going to work out. One will give out before the other. They will not go at the same pace. One will go towards the pretty girls, the other towards lunch. Being unequally yoked simply will not work.

Paul could not have stated this instruction more clearly or strongly. **"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers."**

The literal translation of this text would be, **"stop yoking yourself to unbelievers."** We must not yoke ourselves to those who reject God. We must not be bound together with unbelievers.

You can't plow a donkey with an ox, it simply will not work. They are different in size, they have different speeds and different temperaments. One will be choked and the other will be pinched.

Believers are not to become hitched with unbelievers.

In Ephesians 5:7 he puts it another way, *"Therefore do not be partners with them."* In 1 Corinthians 7:39 Paul gives instructions to widows about remarrying. He states if the husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but "he must belong to the Lord."

Amos 3:3 says, *"Can two walk together except they agree?"*

The instruction is perfectly clear; Christians have no business being in any partnership or close ties with non-Christians. It is dangerous; it is risky and likely to bring great heartache.

2. The Consequences

It is as if Paul anticipated what you would say to this instruction. You are thinking that some non-Christians are nice people and it's not that big of a deal to marry an unbeliever if you are in love. Or, it's ok to go in business with a non-Christian if you know they are trustworthy. Nothing is wrong with hanging out with my friends.

Your rationale may seem to make sense to you but it is deeply flawed. Remember the sermon last week from 2 Corinthians 5:17?

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" As a believer, there is a radical new you. New things are important to you and making Christ Lord of your life is the primary objective of your life.

Paul explains further:

"For what do righteous and wickedness have in common?" Those who have been given the righteousness of Christ through faith have little in common with those who have not. The reason is because the two have completely different masters.

Illus: Before she was a Christian, my mother said to me, "That God of yours is not the answer to everything in life,"

"Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" The two are on different paths. Proverbs 4:18-19 ⁴¹⁸ *The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. ¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble."*

"What harmony (symphony) is there between Christ and Belial (worthless / evil)?" The idea here is that they will not make good music together. They sing songs to different Gods. One is the friend of God, the other is the enemy of God. Non-Christians are knowingly or unknowingly enemies of God.

Illus: A few years ago Pam and I taught a large young adult Sunday School Class in which we had a young lady who was utterly miserable. She grew up in a Christian home and during rebellious days she married a non-Christian. She soon returned to her Christian beliefs as she was a child of God. Every week she would weep and tell us about the terrible hardships of their marriage. Her and her spouse served two totally different masters. She was bright and outgoing and loved the Lord. She wanted to be with God's people but her husband wanted to party and do drugs. My heart would break for this young lady.

You will want to be in church on Sunday, your unbelieving spouse wants to be fishing. You want to tithe, your unbelieving spouse refuses to throw money away by giving it to the church.

These examples just scratch the surface. They do not even begin to address the really complicated differences about sex, money, trust, lifestyle, etc.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.

3. The Application

This principal does not only apply to marriage. It also applies to friendships, business relationships and all other relationships.

Illus: I know people whose lives are literally placed in the hands of a doctor. The question of whether they see another day of light depends on the work ethic and expertise of a single physician.

Who would you rather have as your physician, a Christian or Non-Christian; someone who serves the same master as you or not?

Yes we are to be the light of the world. We are to be the salt of the earth. But as Christians, we must associate ourselves with other believers.

George Washington said; "Associate with men of good quality if you esteem your reputation; for it is better to be alone than in bad company."

God's word tells us "iron sharpens iron." Being around other Christian people will make you a better Christian Christian couples should seek out Christian couples to be their friends.

Youth must insist on "hanging out with other Christians. Your friends will influence who you are more than you will ever know. This is extremely important.

²⁰ *He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20*

Paul quotes from Isaiah, Ezekial and Jeremiah when he writes verses 16-18. He says as the children of God, we are called out to be his people. If we will separate ourselves, he will live among us and we will be his sons and daughters.

The church is not in the business of compromising with the world. Believers should not be in the business of doing so either. **You can't walk with God and run with the Devil.**

Conclusion

The most important relationship you will ever have is your relationship with Christ.

God's word is not intended to make us miserable. God's instruction is to protect us. If we will seek our fulfillment in Christ alone, we will trust our life to his instructions.

⁷He who is full loathes honey, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet. Proverbs 27:7 NIV

If you are filled with the Spirit and walking in Christ, you will only seek that which God says is best for you. However, if you have slipped away from him, you will be hungry and even something that is bitter will be better than nothing.

This is the territory where life's great mistakes are made.

Get the most important relationship right first and then center all others on him.