

Q.3 READ Paul's instructions in 1 Cor. 10:19-22. Why would Paul be so upset about people participating in the Lord's Supper and then also participating in ceremonies of devotion to pagan idols?

Q.4 Does this help make sense of Paul's illustration from the Old Testament in 2 Cor. 6:14? How?

### 2. The promise of partnership from God 2 Cor. 6:16, 18

No partnership could surpass what God offers in the Bible to all who believe in his son Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 6:16 & 18 draws together quotes from Leviticus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and 2 Samuel to give Paul's sermon its punch line: We (Christians) "...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.".... God says: "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters".

Q.5 How might these promises be an encouragement to Christians? What impact do they have on the way a Christian might live?

### 3. Final exhortation 2 Cor. 6:17, 7:1

Rather than a call to "separate" (6:17)<sup>[1]</sup> from the unbelieving world in total, Paul is urging Christians not to mismatch the "temple of the living God" with idol worship and temple rituals and all that was associated with it. Although Paul affirms that there are no other gods (1 Cor. 8:4), there is a spiritual realm and forces not to be confused with godliness (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:20).

Q.6 What might be at stake if Christians are unwisely engaged in the practice of mystery religions and superstitions and religious rituals not related to the God of the Bible?

Q.7 If Christians are encouraged to relate to the people of the world as servants and ambassadors of Christ, what will be the manner in which a Christian engages with the world, but remains true to Christ as Lord?

This section where Paul calls people to "be reconciled" to God comes to an end with an exhortation to take God's promises in 6:16&18 to heart (7:1). Conclude your study with a prayer that gives thanks for these promises of God.



# Ministry Matters

## Study Notes

### #6 Choosing Partners

2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1

*"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."*

2 Corinthians 7:1 NIV

### Warm Up

Think of a time you last teamed up with someone else to do a task that ended in great conflict. What differences between you and the other person contributed to the difficulties?

Re-arrange the following names into their rightful partnerships:  
Fred Astaire/Mickey Mouse, Kerri Pottharst/Paul Keating,  
Minnie Mouse/Oliver Hardy, Tiger Woods/Buzz Aldrin, Stan  
Laurel/Ginger Rogers, Natalie Cook/Cher, Neil Armstrong/Steve  
Williams, Bob Hawke/Sonny Bono.



### Introduction READ 2 Corinthians 6

In chapter 5, the apostle Paul expressed a two-fold confidence that is the foundation of his mission:

1. He and his colleagues live by faith and not by sight (5:7) and though preferring to be with the Lord he can persevere amidst opposition.
2. The Gospel he spreads is for everyone because Christ died for all (5:14) and in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself (5:19). Not only this, but all successors to apostle and his band can be ambassadors of this great truth for the world (20).

Paul finishes chapter 5 with a key statement about Christ: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (5:21)

2nd letter to the corinthians

## An appeal for godly living 2 Cor. 6.14 - 7.1

Chapter 6:1-10 belongs with 5:10-21 as Paul continues his defense of the authenticity of his ministry and the veracity of his message. Verses 11-13 belong with our section and begin the appeal proper. He defends the integrity of his love for the Corinthian brothers and sisters and moves on to this sensitive issue of leaving behind the previous practices of life in Corinth not appropriate for a Christian.



1. **Paul begins with a command in verse 14:** <sup>14</sup>*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.* We know this image from the Old Testament. This is an farming metaphor that turns our pages back to Deuteronomy chapter 22. There, the law of Moses, forbade the yoking or joining of different breeds of animals and forbade the breeding of two different species of beasts.
2. **Secondly,** Paul gives **five rhetorical questions** in verses 14b – 16a for which the assumed answer in the original Greek is a resounding “negative”.
  - For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?
  - Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?
  - <sup>15</sup>What harmony is there between Christ and Satan?<sup>[a]</sup>
  - What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?
  - <sup>16</sup>What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?
3. After this follows **a number of Old Testament quotations** to explain the “why” of separation, including a text from Isaiah 52 telling the exiles to leave the foreign land and move to the place God has rescued them to live in. 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.”*<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>17</sup>*“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”*<sup>[c]</sup>  
<sup>18</sup>*“I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*<sup>[d]</sup>
4. And then **finally** there is a call to holy living. <sup>7</sup>*“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”*

### Footnotes:

- a. [2 Corinthians 6:15](#) Greek Beliar, a variant of Belial– a name for Satan
- b. [2 Corinthians 6:16](#) Lev. 26:12; Jer. 32:38; Ezek. 37:27
- c. [2 Corinthians 6:17](#) Isaiah 52:11; Ezek. 20:34,41
- d. [2 Corinthians 6:18](#) 2 Samuel 7:14; 7:8
- e. Corinth had much pagan temple worship, including temples of Apollo and Aphrodite and 20 statues of other gods, 6 other temples to Greek gods, and 5 precincts for the ‘Lords’ of the mysteries. Also see 1 Cor. 8:5.
- f. [Isaiah 52:11](#) 2 Cor. 6:17 is a call is from a former life to a new one as it was in Isaiah’s context



## 1. Identify Idolatry 2 Cor. 6.14-16

Idolatry is a major sin according to the Bible. *“You shall have no other Gods before me”* (Exodus 20:2) is a foundational commandment from God. At Corinth and Athens and many other cities in Europe and Asia Minor in the 1st Century, day to day life was infused with spiritual idolatry; religious practices of devotion and reliance on dumb idols or demonic spirits that are no substitute for the one true and living God.

- Q.1 Identify words such as Satan (or Belial), temple, idols, unclean things, purify, contaminate, holiness in the text. What hints do these give us about the problems specific to the Corinthian context?<sup>[e]</sup>
- Q.2 Why might it be important for people who become Christians today to refrain from past activities & associations? What types?

### Misunderstandings

Misunderstandings of biblical commands can be costly. Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah to the Corinthians when he writes: *“Therefore come out from them and be separate”, says the Lord.*” (2 Cor. 6.17) And earlier he urges them, *“Do not be mismatched with unbelievers.”* (2 Cor. 5.11) How should a Christian respond to the Bible when it says boldly, “come out from them and be separate?” Is the apostle demanding that 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:3 has been the catalyst for many misunderstandings in the church over many years. Some have taught this verse to mean a complete non-involvement with non-believers. However, we can see in Paul’s other Corinthian correspondence he is **permissive of many partnerships with people who are not Christians:**

- **1 Corinthians 10**, Paul permits eating of food bought in the markets that had been offered to pagan idols (vss. 25, 26) and dining with pagans in their homes (vs.27).
- **1 Corinthians 7:12-16** Paul encourages any married person who becomes a Christian to stay married to their partner irrespective of the partner’s beliefs.
- **1 Corinthians 14:22-25** it was clear that people of other beliefs are welcome to attend Christian meetings so they can hear and learn of Christ’s love.
- **1 Corinthians 5:9** Paul pleads with them not to withdraw from contact with people for that, he says, “would mean to leave the world.”

It’s timely to recall that our **Lord Jesus** himself was renowned for his proximity to those who had no apparent “righteousness”. Look at the reputation Jesus attained according to Matthew 11:19: *Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners.”* It was Jesus who prayed in John 17 that God might send his followers into the world, just as he was sent. It would seem to be a great contradiction then if Paul, when he calls the Corinthian Christians with a specific command to **be separate** from certain people, is making a blanket command for withdrawal from contact with those who don’t believe. Instead, Paul must have something more specific in mind; something relevant to life in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Corinth. If we get that right, we might better apply the lasting meaning of the command to our life in the church today.