

## Bible Study: Unequally Yoked?

**Topic:** Relationships with Non-Believers

**Key Texts:** 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 1 Peter 3:1-2

### Introduction for the Leader

- **The Tension:** Christians live in a tension. We are commanded to "go into all the world" (Mark 16:15), yet we are warned not to be "yoked" together with unbelievers.
  - **The Goal:** This study aims to define the difference between *association* (which is necessary for evangelism) and *yoking* (which can be dangerous for our souls).
  - **The Metaphor:** A "yoke" is a wooden beam fastening two animals together to pull a plow. If an ox and a donkey are yoked, they walk at different speeds and pull in different directions. The work is ruined, and the animals are injured.
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### Part 1: The Principle of the Yoke

**Objective:** To understand *why* God warns us against deep partnerships with those who do not share our allegiance to Christ.

#### Scripture Reading:

*"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ... Therefore, 'Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.'" — 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17*

**Commentary:** Paul is not saying we should shun non-believers; otherwise, we would have to leave the world entirely (1 Cor 5:10). The key word is "**Yoked.**" A yoke implies a binding partnership where two people are forced to move in the same direction.

- **In Marriage:** If one spouse wants to move toward God and the other does not, there is constant friction.
- **In Business:** If a Christian partner wants to run the business by Biblical ethics and the non-believing partner wants to prioritize profit at any cost, the "plow" will break. This command isn't about Christians being "better" than others; it is about *direction*. You cannot walk in two directions at once.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What is the practical difference between having a non-Christian *friend* versus being *yoked* to a non-Christian? Where is the line?
  2. Why do you think Paul uses strong contrasts like "Light vs. Darkness" and "Temple of God vs. Idols"? Is that too harsh for modern ears?
  3. Have you ever seen a business partnership or relationship struggle because the two people had fundamentally different "moral compasses"?
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### Part 2: The Strategy of Influence (Winning Without Words)

**Objective:** To address those who are *already* in relationships with non-believers (specifically marriage, or close family) and how to influence them.

#### Scripture Reading:

*“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.” — 1 Peter 3:1-2*

**Commentary:** This is a powerful text for those who feel stuck. Perhaps you became a Christian after you were married, or you are the only believer in your family. Peter’s advice is counter-intuitive: Don’t nag. Don’t preach sermons at the dinner table. Instead, let your **conduct** be the sermon. When a non-believer sees a dramatic change in your character—your patience, your kindness, your "purity and reverence"—it creates a curiosity that words cannot. We influence them by showing them a better way to live, not just arguing for a better way to think.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Why is "nagging" or constant debating usually ineffective in bringing someone to Christ?
  2. The text says they can be won "without words." meaningful? Can you share an example of a time someone’s behavior impressed you more than their arguments?
  3. How difficult is it to maintain "purity and reverence" when those around you are not doing the same?
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### Part 3: Influence vs. Being Influenced

**Objective:** To establish boundaries. How do we ensure we are pulling them up, rather than them pulling us down?

#### Scripture Concept:

- **1 Corinthians 15:33:** *"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"*

**Commentary:** We must be honest about our own strength. It is often easier for a non-believer to pull a Christian into worldly habits than for a Christian to pull a non-believer into holiness. Think of standing on a chair. Is it easier for you to pull someone up onto the chair, or for them to pull you down to the floor? Gravity is on their side. We must constantly evaluate: **Am I influencing them, or are they changing me?** If you find yourself skipping church, compromising your language, or justifying sin to "fit in" with your friend or partner, the yoke is breaking you.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What are the "warning signs" that a relationship is starting to negatively affect your spiritual walk?
  2. How can a Christian maintain strong boundaries while still being loving and welcoming?
  3. Why is it important to have a strong community of believers (the Church) to support you when you are trying to minister to non-believing friends?
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### Conclusion & Prayer

**Leader's Closing:** "God calls us to be salt and light. Salt must touch the food to flavor it, but if the salt loses its saltiness, it is useless. We must stay close to the world to save it, but close to God to stay saved. Let's pray for wisdom in our relationships."

#### Prayer Focus:

- For those in difficult marriages with non-believers.
- For wisdom in choosing business partners and close friends.
- For the courage to be "separate" when necessary.