

Marriage is a Yoking

*“DO NOT BE UNEQUALLY YOKED
TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14a

1. Translations

- **NKJV** – “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”
- **NRSV** – “Do not be mismated with unbelievers.”
- **GNT** – “Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers.”
- **NIV** – “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.”
- **NET** – “Do not become partners with those who do not believe.”
- **NASB** – “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers.”
- **CEB** – “Don’t be tied up as equal partners with people who don’t believe.”
- **NLT** – “Don’t team up with those who are unbelievers.”

2. Definitions

BELIEVER

- Acts 5:14a defines a “*believer*” as a member of the Lord’s church, i.e. one who meets the initial conditions of salvation.

“And **believers** were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.”

NOTE: Also consider Acts 2:38-47.

2. Definitions

YOKED

- Merriam-Webster defines “yoked” as, “*To become joined or linked.*”

2. Definitions

MARRIAGE

- Merriam-Webster defines “marriage” as:
 - ❖ *“The state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law.”*
 - ❖ *“The institution whereby individuals are joined in a marriage.”*
 - ❖ *“An intimate or close union.”*

2. Definitions

MARRIAGE

- Marriage qualifies as a “yoking,” especially in light of Christ’s definition of marriage in Matt. 19:6:

“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore **what God has joined together**, let not man separate.”

3. Immediate Context

- 2 Cor. 6:14a is a general command regarding relationships. Marriage does not appear to be the specific relationship under consideration since verse 17 would contradict Matt. 19:6.
- However, when a general command condemns something (no unequally yoked relationships), the specific (unequally yoked marriage) would also be condemned, unless it contradicts another passage.

3. Immediate Context (Cont.)

EXAMPLES OF THE GENERAL CONDEMNING THE SPECIFIC

- Lying “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all **liars** shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (**Rev. 21:7-8**).

Since liars are condemned in the general sense, all specific types of lying are also condemned: Lying by omission, outright lying, telling “half-truths,” etc.

3. Immediate Context (Cont.)

EXAMPLES OF THE GENERAL CONDEMNING THE SPECIFIC

➤ Sexual Immorality

“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, **sexually immoral**, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (**Rev. 21:7-8**).

Since the sexually immoral are condemned in the general sense, all specific types of sexual immorality are also condemned: Committing fornication, homosexuality, viewing pornography, etc.

3. Immediate Context (Cont.)

THE GENERAL CONDEMNS THE SPECIFIC

- Though marriage is not the specific relationship under consideration in 2 Cor. 6:14a, the same principle used in these examples would also apply to any relationship which is considered an unequal yoking, including marriage, unless contradicted by another passage.

4. Remote Context

ARE 1 COR. 7:12-13 AND 1 PET. 3:1-2 THE CONTRADICTIONS?

“But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him” (1 Cor. 7:12-13).

1 Cor. 7:14 appears to presuppose that being married to an unbeliever is an unequal yoking (sin) since the child brought forth from such a union is considered unclean:

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; **otherwise your children would be unclean**, but now they are holy.”

4. Remote Context (Cont.)

ARE 1 COR. 7:12-13 AND 1 PET. 3:1-2 THE CONTRADICTIONS?

“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear” (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

- Whereas 1 Cor. 7:12-16 explains the reason why the believing spouse must not depart from the marriage, 1 Peter 3:1-2 explains how the believer should act in that marriage if they want to save their unbelieving spouse.

4. Remote Context (Cont.)

Neither 1 Cor. 7:12-13 nor 1 Pet. 3:1-2 serve as approvals of believers marrying unbelievers, but instead explain what the believers' response should be if they put themselves into that situation.

“If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days” (**Deut. 22:28-29**).

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (**1 John 2:1**).

4. Remote Context (Cont.)

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- If a person's spouse passes away, they must marry "*in the Lord*" (1 Cor. 7:39), i.e. a believer. Generally speaking, a widow would be one who is the most in need of a spouse, but they cannot marry just anyone. It would be odd [by my human reasoning] that widows are the only ones who are limited to marrying believers.
- The apostles had a "*right to take along a believing wife*" (1 Cor. 9:5). The passage does not say the apostles had a "right to take along a wife." It would be odd [by my human reasoning] that this right (or power) would only be limited to the apostles and not us today.

5. Repentance

- The Bible defines repentance as a turning away from sin. It was that way in the Old Testament (Jer. 34:15-16; 2 Chro. 7:14), and it is that way in the New Testament (Acts 3:19, ESV; Heb. 10:26).
- To repent of a marriage that is an unequal yoking, we cannot separate ourselves from that relationship (1 Cor. 7:12-13; 1 Pet. 3:1-2). That is, we cannot turn from that marriage like, for example, one who commits adultery must stop committing adultery (John 8:1-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).
- So, how do we repent of such a sin when we cannot turn (separate ourselves) from that sinful relationship?

5. Repentance (Cont.)

Have sorrow for transgressing God's law:

“For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it . . . Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that **your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner,** that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. **For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted . . .** For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter” (2 Cor. 7:8-11).

5. Repentance (Cont.)

Remain faithful to God in light of the fact that temptations may come about from being with someone who is not a believer:

“Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (**1 Cor. 15:33, ASV**).

5. Repentance (Cont.)

Teach others to learn from your mistake in hopes that they will not commit the same sin:

Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future (Prov. 19:20, ESV).

Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds." ' But they did not hear nor heed Me," says the Lord (Zech. 1:4).

5. Repentance (Cont.)

Strive to save the unbelieving spouse by obedience to the Gospel:

“For how do you know, O wife, whether you will **save your husband**? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will **save your wife**?” (1 Cor. 7:16).

“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that **even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear**” (1 Pet. 3:1-2).