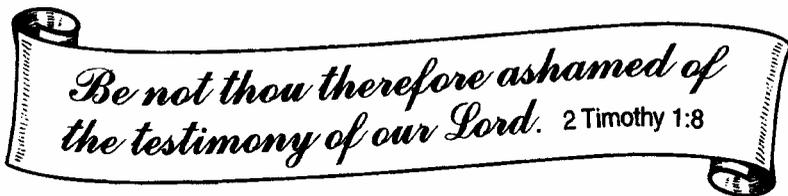


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Remaining Free From Unequal Yokes in Business

The teaching against the unequal yoke is a Biblical imperative taught in 2 Corinthians 6. Apostle Paul defends the doctrine by asking, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Corinthians 6:14, 15). Also the prophet Amos wrote, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Clearly the answer to Amos's question is no.

The teaching against the unequal yoke is also implied in numerous other Scriptures. Early in the life of Israel, God commanded that they should not sow divers (different) seeds in a vineyard lest the fruit be defiled. They were not to plow with an ox and an ass together or to wear garments of divers sorts, such as wool and linen woven together (Deuteronomy 22).

The doctrine of separation and the teaching against the unequal yoke is suggested by these directives. The mixing of seeds can be likened to mixing truth with error or unsound doctrine. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits" (1 John 4:1). Plowing with an ox and an ass together parallels the unequal yoke in service and can be applied to uniting various religious groups in evangelism and relief work. The priest wore linen,

symbolizing holiness unto the Lord. The mixing of cloths represented the mixing of sanctified and unsanctified clothing.

The issue of separation was paramount to Israel's survival. They were often commanded not to mingle with the pagan nations in the land of Canaan. Yet they repeatedly disobeyed God's Word, resulting in punishment by enemy nations who brought Israel to servitude and destruction.

In the New Testament, our Lord warned His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and prayed that they would be kept from the defilement of the world. The apostles likewise taught maintaining purity in doctrine and conduct, remaining separate from the world, and withdrawing from those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to sound doctrine.

These and other Scriptures present the Biblical teaching against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers. We need to apply this teaching to business life and be conscientious in forming business organizations and endeavors that will not dull our appreciation for holiness and honesty as a way of life.

The unequal yoke affects a wide range of business relationships and investments. Following are some of the issues that must be addressed in light of these Scriptural teachings.

There are two types of unequal yokes, the technical unequal yoke and the practical unequal yoke. A technical unequal yoke exists when a believer and an unbeliever jointly form a business enterprise. A practical unequal yoke exists when there is no formal joining in a business partnership, but the believer and the unbeliever associate so closely that, for all practical purposes, they are unequally yoked. The latter is less binding and less formal than the former. However, the two are equally detrimental. Freely socializing with non-Christians and being comfortable with professing Christians on a casual level will make it easier to pass over the barrier established by God for our spiritual survival.

Although businesses must be well organized to be efficient, competitive, and profitable, this may never be our all-consuming goal. Uniting efforts and ownership with someone who has business talent but has little regard for spiritual values creates a technical unequal yoke. Business owners have sometimes delegated administrative responsibilities to relatives who lacked spiritual convictions. As a result, worldly business practices have been introduced because of a disregard for Bible principles, creating stress in personal relationships and a threat to spiritual vitality.

Business seminars and trade

shows also present the threat of the unequal yoke. These events are organized to discuss issues and procedures, to update knowledge in a given field, to present product improvement, and to develop specific skills. They vary from casual to formal and from small groups to large events. Presentations are usually given by experts who are knowledgeable in specific facets of the industry. However, humor and entertainment are often included to maintain interest. Opportunity is given to meet business colleagues and company representatives and, perhaps, gather some profitable ideas in a relaxed setting.

These meetings present a snare because they carry the threat of a practical unequal yoke. Because they bring together people from all walks of life who are united by similar business interests, they encourage believers to let down their guards. These environments also tend to be very secular and humanistic. While it is not wrong to improve our methods and to eliminate waste, we must remember that we are only passing through this world and are not here to stay. To excel in the business field is secondary to the spiritual well-being of ourselves, our families, and our congregations.

When mingling with the public, one safeguard is to wear a plain suit. A simple rule to follow is, When others dress in formal attire,

our attire should be formal as well. Even in a setting when others are casual, we should dress more formally. This will remind us of who we are and may offer a silent restraint against being too free in a worldly and materialistic setting.

A technical unequal yoke is also formed by purchasing stocks in public or private companies. This includes buying mutual funds. These companies at times may employ unchristian business methods to secure trade or may use civil litigation. Because stockholders are part owners in a business, they are partly responsible for the actions of

the company.

As Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God, we too should be focusing on our heavenly home. We are in the world but not of the world. Even though business is important, we may not compromise our spiritual conviction for financial gain. We need to be open to the brotherly address and ask counsel from other brethren and our ministry. As we remain free from the unequal yoke, our material efforts will be better suited to enhance our spiritual well-being.

M. G. S., PA



The Virtue of Eschewing Evil

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). Job eschewed evil; he avoided or stayed away from it.

Today, we find ourselves in a society that no longer thinks that evil is evil. Many believe either that there is no Supreme Being to whom they are accountable or that they can alter the Word of God to accommodate their evil lifestyle. The challenge for us is to follow Job's example in eschewing evil.

The virtue of eschewing evil is so much a part of our way of life that we may tend to lose sight of the

fundamental principles involved. We are blessed by the privilege of living in a brotherhood that influences us and our families for godliness. Nevertheless, we must remain alert to the influences of evil.

As we endeavor, by God's grace, to live perfect and upright lives and eschew evil, we need to begin where Job began. He feared God and had a proper view of his standing before Him (Job 9:30-33; 40:4). We exercise a godly fear as we recognize our own personal need for reconciliation and apply the work of the Daysman, Jesus Christ, to our hearts (Job 9:33; 19:25, 26).

We eschew evil by exposing ourselves to God's Word through personal and collective worship (Job

1:5). Job considered God's Word as more important than his necessary food (Job 23:12). We need to understand that God's Word is of more value to us than anything else in our experience. Does the Bible have priority in our daily lives? Do we find it more interesting to discuss the latest world news after church services or to consider thoughts relating to the message? Filling our minds with inspiring Scriptural truth leaves no place for evil.

We eschew evil by personally choosing to depart from it (Job 28:28). This is done initially when we experience the new birth. We also need to depart from evil in many ways in everyday experience. A key area is our thought life. Job said that "to depart from evil is understanding." We cannot properly understand the ways of godliness when our thinking is evil. We must daily choose to depart from evil in our thinking. The way we think will eventually be revealed in our actions. Our minds will be filled with something, so let us fill them with virtuous thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

We eschew evil by personally choosing to live a separated way of life. God said that there was none like Job in the earth. Apparently his way of life was different from those around him. Rather than being conformed to the world, we need to be transformed (Romans 12:2). Sepa-

ration begins in our hearts and is reflected in all areas of our lives. We must see the value of separation in practical daily living and realize the need for this barrier between us and evil.

We eschew evil by keeping our lips from speaking wickedness (Job 27:4). We must understand the potential of our lips for either good or bad. (James 3:2-13). The challenge lies before us to weed out the bad and cultivate the good.

Does our speech complement our Christian profession and our way of life? We need to be aware of the tendency to use street language. Many of the questionable phrases and words used in society seem harmless but have evil implications. We should remain free from those expressions.

Keeping our lips also applies to what we say about others. Our speech must build rather than tear down. We should avoid negative talk about others' weaknesses. Rather, we should highlight their strong points and encourage growth in their lives. "But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief" (Job 16:5).

We need to be seeking for opportunities to encourage each other. It may be the brother experiencing financial difficulty or the sister facing the challenge of caring for a child born with physical limitations. It is our Christian duty to

minister to the needs of others both in word and in deed. Job called his three friends "miserable comforters," because they failed to bring encouragement to him in the day of his calamity.

We eschew evil by guarding our eyes. "I made a covenant with mine eyes" (Job 31:1). This passage especially warns about guarding our eyes from the immoral, but the principle also includes avoiding evil in general. The entertainment industry produces many scenes of violence and immorality, providing what people in society desire to see. Although we have freed ourselves from the grip of television, we are challenged through other avenues, such as the mailbox, the billboards, the shopping malls, and the exposure we have to the moral looseness

in society.

How can we escape this threat? How can we conduct profitable street meetings in the face of bold, unrestrained manifestations of immorality in dress and behavior? We cannot avoid this exposure altogether, so the challenge lies in the frequency of this exposure and our response to it. We must believe that God can help us (1 Corinthians 10:13), and faithfully do our part in finding those ways of escape. The more we guard our eyes, the less we need to weed out of our minds.

Let us allow the testimony of Job to challenge us in our daily Christian experience. May we too be persons described by God as "perfect and upright.... one that [fears] God, and [eschews] evil."

M.R, PA



Parents Providing a Disciplined Home Life

Many of us have fond memories of home. Even those who did not know the blessing of stable home life in their childhood often have fond memories of homes they have come to appreciate. As we reflect on these fond memories, we recognize that a happy home does not just happen. A happy home is rather the product of much love and order. This needed order can be effected only if discipline is revealed

in all of home life.

Respect for authority is one of the basics on which disciplined home life is built. This respect begins in the home as parents recognize God as the final authority and as His Word is given first place. The church is then held in high regard, and her teaching and standards are obeyed out of appreciation for the church and what the standards represent. The parents each take seriously their roles as taught in the Scriptures. Children are taught that

obedience and respect are necessary and required.

Rules are necessary for disciplined home life. Children need to learn that relating properly to these rules brings rest and contentment and that rules are for the good of all. Children are taught to fit in with the rules rather than expect the rules to be fit to them. Rules help the child to recognize his responsibility to his parents and family.

Rules often form the framework that brings conflict with the child's selfish nature. This gives opportunity for the will of the child to be broken. Parents fulfill their responsibility by chastening for willful disobedience. Corporal punishment is not merely an option for Christian parents but a Scriptural imperative (Proverbs 23:13, 14). As a child's will is brought into subjection to the home, he is prepared to relate to other areas of authority in society and the church.

Having a family schedule is also an important part of disciplined home life. A set time needs to be established for rising in the morning, for eating meals, and for retiring in the evening. These disciplines help us to learn self-control and to be considerate of others. As the family grows, the need for a family schedule intensifies, yet maintaining a schedule can also become more challenging. As we blend our family schedule with church and school schedules, our

children receive an example of how they should blend as well. Being scheduled is important, but the schedule should serve the family and not the family the schedule. Deviation from the schedule can be made when it benefits the family but not just to satisfy the selfish whims of one individual.

Teaching our children responsibility for their actions is an important part of disciplined home life. We are responsible not only for wrongdoing but also for neglect and for accidents. The socialistic and insurance mentality of our society may be weakening this principle among us. Do we take responsibility for our actions and help our children to do likewise? If our child accidentally breaks a window at school, do we help him take responsibility to fix it or to pay to have it fixed? The discipline of being responsible for one's actions or for negligence helps to teach carefulness and respect for others.

Our homes should teach our children their responsibility toward the family unit. As children grow, they increasingly are able to contribute to the family. Even when they are small, they should help with family chores such as washing dishes and working in the garden. Small children should not be paid for doing these chores but should see it as their duty in the home. As they mature, they should contribute financially to the home. This helps the

young person to feel part of the home and curbs the independence that is a snare to youth. It should be the youth's desire to serve the Lord and the church with his family rather than to seek his own advancement.

Teaching our children to consider work as a privilege, rather than as a necessary evil, is one of the goals of disciplined home life. Work did not come because of sin; God already commanded man at Creation to dress and keep the Garden (Genesis 2:15). Thus, work should be viewed as God's will for man and not something to avoid. Children should learn to apply themselves to manual labor and to persevere at their work till they are done.

Our children also need to be taught the discipline of studying. Study is hard work, but it is necessary for learning the things that will help children to grow up to be productive and to communicate the Gospel. We should help our children put their best into schoolwork. However, we must be careful that they do not develop the concept that if they study hard, they can avoid hard manual labor. We do our children a favor when we help them learn to follow the command, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Requiring neatness and thriftiness

are important aspects of disciplined home life. These virtues contribute to a sense of fulfillment for all. A child never learns the satisfaction of a job well done if the work is left unfinished or is done carelessly. Thriftiness helps the child appreciate the things he has as well as the joy that goes with sharing with others. Our horizons are lifted beyond the temporal as we practice these virtues.

Lastly, the discipline of thankfulness is promoted in disciplined home life. We are not thankful by nature but learn thankfulness by humbling our hearts and realizing the truth, "What halt thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Thankfulness should permeate our homes—for God and His gifts to us, for our fellow family members, and for our brethren and all that they do for us. We need to teach our children to express their thankfulness to both God and man. This begins by teaching our children to give thanks to God before we eat and to say thank you when they receive a gift. As we do so, thankfulness will issue into the grace of generosity.

As parents, we want to produce happy homes for our families as those before us provided for us. We must love and discipline our children in a godly way so they too can have pleasant memories of a happy, disciplined home. *J.M., PA*

Congregational Outreach

Street Meetings

Saturday morning dawns—it is pleasant and sunny, and it is our scheduled time for street meetings in the city. A group of brethren and sisters gathers to receive some directions and to fill the vans.

About ninety minutes of driving brings us to a park-like area surrounded by a busy traffic circle in the heart of the city. Brethren and sisters from several other congregations meet us here to help in the work. We find numerous people in the park. Many are passing through on foot or on bicycles; some sit on park benches. A number appear to be homeless. All need to hear the Gospel message.

A portable public address system is quickly set up in a grassy area, and the service begins. After an introduction, we engage in singing that is interspersed with brief, pertinent topics and personal testimonies of the goodness of the Lord. The service lasts about one and one-half hours.

During the service, several brethren are involved in tract distribution. Some personal contacts are made in this way. We are interested in meeting anyone who has questions related to spiritual issues. Also, a tract rack is set up a little distance away from the group to provide another outlet for Gospel literature.

In the afternoon we hold another service at a different location in the city before heading homeward.

Street meeting work has its challenges. Perhaps the first is to decide to be there. The work is not easy, but it is inspirational to the spiritual mind, even when the results seem so meager. There is blessing in laboring together in God's work. There is blessing in sharing what we believe and what the Lord has done for us, even if the message is shunned. When someone shows interest in the truth, we rejoice at the work of God in men's hearts.

Another challenge is to remember that we are there to be heard. With this in view, the singers should stand in a close group, singing with good volume and pronouncing the words clearly. Speakers should speak directly toward the microphone, using reasonable volume, clear enunciation, and very moderate speed.

Any time we go to the city, we face exposure to a wicked society. Immorality and indecency find bold expression in the lives of many. We must guard our eyes and our thoughts to maintain our personal purity. Concentrating on the words that are spoken and on the message of the songs will help to make street meetings a time of inspiration rather than temptation.

We also do well to remember that our personal appearance affects our testimony. We must never be ashamed to appear as Plain People. Having a peaceful countenance and expressing alertness and dignity in our posture will complement the message we present.

Sometimes challenges face us in the form of nonchalance or outright resistance to the message. What are our feelings and attitudes when we encounter strange actions or unsanctified reactions to the Gospel message? When a drunkard dramatically smashes his bottle on the nearby sidewalk, do we experience feelings of revulsion or do we sorrow for the spiritual condition of the man? If a convicted listener

shouts angrily at the group, are we intimidated or do we consider that he is really rejecting our Lord with whom we identify? When a man calmly declares, "I am your Lord God!" and then continues talking nonsense, are we amused or saddened by his deceived condition?

Each of these people has an eternal soul! When the message we present is not well received, let us not be discouraged or personally offended. Rather, may the Lord grant us a greater burden for the lost because their rejection of the truth will bring them to ruin.

The Lord is interested in these efforts. Let us willingly and faithfully support the efforts of our church to share the Gospel with the lost.



Beatitude Series (Part 4)
"Blessed Are They Which
Do Hunger and Thirst
After Righteousness"

How is our appetite for righteousness? The following questions may help us decide.

How am I enjoying my personal devotions? Upon being asked, a brother shared that he enjoys rising at 4:00 A.M. to sit down with his Bible. "It's so sweet," he said. "The hours slip by without me realizing it." That challenged me.

Do my private devotions include study helps and a paper and pencil? Or do I only study "in depth" when

preparing to teach others? If we have properly fed on the Word, we will, like David, have something to meditate on throughout the day or in the sleepless hours of the night.

Do I love the preaching of the Word? Do I regularly take notes? Do I consider it to be a dry thing or drink it in and find it refreshing? How many Gospel sermons are to be found among my recorded selections?

How much is spiritual discussion a part of my life? What do I love to talk about? Vehicles, dresses, business, home decor, church problems, people problems—do these domi-

nate my discussions? Or do I have time to converse on the "hard to be understood" things of the Word, the joys of the Christian walk, or the subtleties of the devil?

What is the reward for the spiritually hungry? "For they shall be filled." How do we reconcile this "filling" with the "panting after God" mentioned elsewhere in the Bible? David, who already knew God, said, "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments" (Psalm 119:131). Two kinds of soul hunger are in focus in these verses—the wandering hunger that takes the sinner from pleasure to pleasure without supplying any lasting fulfillment and the "bittersweet" hunger that draws the Christian back to the living Word. The Christian is not so filled that his appetite is quenched. Instead, he has tasted and, consequently, wants more.

We can easily become side-

tracked from our eternal perspective and find ourselves putting all our energies into temporal things. The result of taking this course is to begin to wonder what the point is of the circle of life—only to be reminded by the faithful Spirit of God that life is empty because we have not been feeding properly. This has been called a "sweet bitterness. The next best thing to living in the light of God's love is to be unhappy till we have it" (Spurgeon). Sweet, because God has not neglected us; bitter, because we have neglected Him too long.

"How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life" (Psalm 36:7-9).

"Come Ye Apart"

*We each must learn to come apart
From all this world's confusion,
And spend some time alone with God
To reach each right conclusion.*

Sister Ruth.