

mise our message. The Bible says that the message of Christ is *an offense* and a *stumbling stone*. We must allow the message to be an offense, but never allow *ourselves* to be an offense. We become the offense when we condescend, overbear, or judge.

📖 1 Cor 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the _____, nor to the _____, nor to the _____ of God:

Paul mentions three types of people in this verse: the religious and unsaved, the pagan and unsaved, and the saved. Our task as Christians is to learn to behave properly toward each of these. We must understand our unbelieving friends and use wisdom to present the gospel to them in both an inoffensive and meaningful way.

📖 1 Cor 10:33. **Q.** Paul sought to _____ all men, by not seeking his own _____, so that all could be _____.

This kind of selfless attitude is what is required in winning our unsaved friends to Christ. We acknowledge their unsaved state, their sinful lifestyle, even their rejection of the gospel, but we still seek to witness, either through direct conversation, or by modeling a transformed life. If your direct verbal witness has been rejected, it is still quite possible that your unbelieving friends will be saved by the long-term observation of your Christian character (Matt 5:16).

A Word of Caution

As we have already seen, our relationship with our unsaved friends should never compromise our Christian testimony. If the friends that you want to witness to are the same friends that you once practiced sin with, you may find yourself being tempted and drawn back into your old lifestyle (James 1:14). If you find that maintaining a friendship with these people is too much to bear, than you ought to separate from them. Compromising your testimony will do far more to hinder your friends from being saved, than your separation from them. You will still have an influence on them through prayer, and by the testimony that you have kept. Let's review:

1. Have friendships with the unsaved for the purpose of witnessing, not companionship.
2. Do not allow any of your actions to be misconstrued as acceptance of your friend's sinfulness.
3. Do not create undue offense by being overbearing or judgmental.
4. Maintain a right testimony at all times.
5. Use wisdom in seeking appropriate opportunities to share the gospel in meaningful ways.
6. Be ready to separate if your friendship becomes a hindrance to your spiritual life.

A Christian's Relationship with His Unsaved Friends 2

Developing Renewed Relationships

Many of us have friendships that have carried over from a time when we were not saved or have developed friendships since we've believed, with those who are unbelievers. The question arises: How do I behave in these relationships now that I am saved? In this study, we will examine some clear biblical principles that we can apply to our home, school, work and other areas where we have friendships with the unsaved.

Understanding the Balance of Separation

In last week's study we learned that we are to be *separate* from this world (2 Cor 6:17). We learned that Jesus has left us *in* this world, but that we are not *of* this world (John 15:19). The Bible clearly teaches that as Christians, we are to be different and distinct as we seek to live godly lives in the midst of an ungodly world. Although this principle is very clear, and very important, some have taken this principle to unintended extremes, and have turned *separation* into *reclusivism* or *communalism*. To be separate from this world does not mean to be withdrawn, unengaged or isolated.

📖 John 17:15. **Q.** What did Jesus pray regarding our relationship to the unsaved world?

📖 Philippians 2:15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, _____ of a crooked and perverse nation, _____ ye shine as lights in the world;

📖 1 Cor 5:9-11. **Q.** Who did Paul tell the church not to "company" with?

Q. v10 He was *not* referring to the fornicators of _____.

Q. v10 If this were the case, then we "must needs _____"

God has chosen to leave us, as saved people, in the midst of an unsaved culture. The reality is that all around us are unbelievers who partake in sinful lifestyles. If we were to try to separate completely from these, we would have to be taken completely out of the world!

So separation does not mean isolation. We *will* have relationships with unbelievers, and these unbelievers *will* practice sinful things which are forbidden for Christians. For the rest of this study we will examine how we are to relate to these unsaved friends.



Do you think God permits us to have unbelieving friends?

In 1 Cor 10:27, Paul gives instructions regarding a hypothetical situation where a Christian is invited for dinner.

Q. Who did the inviting? _____.

Q. Who was invited? (based on the context) _____.

Q. Paul continues with advice, assuming that the Christian was d_____ t___ g___.

In Paul's hypothetical situation, he envisions an unsaved person inviting a saved person over for dinner. He did not instruct the Corinthians to decline the invitation, but rather gave them instructions assuming their acceptance of it. Based on this, do you think Paul was advocating isolationism? That is, that the Christians of the day cut off all ties to unbelievers? Of course not. Paul assumed that the Corinthians had acquaintances outside of the Church and he sought to help them to behave properly within those relationships.

Eph 5:3-7. **Q.** After this long list of sins committed by unbelievers, what instruction does God give us in verse 7?

The proper balance of separation comes when we realize that we are *in* the world but not *of* the world. That is, we will always have relationships with unbelievers, but we are told very clearly not to *behave* like unbelievers. This is one of the keys to having proper relationships with our unsaved friends.

Next, we find another key principle in 1 Corinthians 10. The context is that of an unsaved, idol worshipper inviting a Christian for a meal. Some of the meat which the unbeliever is serving may, or may not have been first offered to an idol. How is the Christian to proceed? Is he to go ahead and eat this meat or to refuse?

In 1 Cor 10:25, Paul tells the Corinthians to buy and eat any meat that his sold in *the shambles* (or meat market) and not to ask whether or not it was first offered to idols. Why? Because the earth and all the fullness is God's (v26) and all things are sanctified by prayer (1 Tim 4:5). But then in verse 28 of 1 Cor 10, Paul gives different instructions. 1 Cor 10:28.



Why do you think Paul's instructions have changed?



If the Christian went ahead and ate this meat, acknowledging that it was first offered to idols, what message would he be sending to his unsaved friend?

So we find a second principle. Not only are we to not partake with the sinful lifestyle of unbelievers, but we are to avoid any actions that may send the message that we *condone* such things.

In today's contemporary church movement this principle is lost. Biblical standards of separation have been eliminated in the name of *relating*. We are to be friendly, to influence and to witness, but never at the expense of our godly character, or personal holiness. If we destroy our distinctiveness in the pursuit of being a witness, we destroy the one thing that *validates* our witness!

Inoffensive in All Things

Our Reactions

2 Cor 6:1-10 **Q.** Here we read a long list of life situations including persecution, distress, need, sorrow, false accusations, etc. **Q.** According to v3, how are we to behave in all of these situations?

Q. According to verse 3, why are we to be inoffensive in these things?

To "give offense" literally means "to be a stumbling block". One of the greatest testimonies to God's saving power is the way in which Christians react to trouble, adversity or opposition. If we are to win our unsaved friends, we must be sure to maintain a godly attitude in the midst of trials. When our reactions do not match our profession, we can actually hinder unbelievers from coming to Christ. We must always behave as if others are observing us... because they are!

Our Witness

As we maintain a proper testimony before our unsaved friends, we ought to seek out ways to share the gospel with them. In essence, every friendship we have outside of the church ought to be for the purpose of witnessing. How can we approach presenting the gospel to our unsaved friends?

Col 4:5-6. **Q.** How should our speech be towards those "that are without" (the unsaved)?

Matt 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore _____ as serpents, and _____ as doves.

Php 2:15. **Q.** We are to be B_____ and H_____

It is easy sometimes for the Christian to become overbearing in his witness. It is important when we talk to our unsaved friends that we use wisdom, and speak graciously. We must learn our friends and seek opportunity to witness to them in a manner which is inoffensive. That is not to say that we compro-