

“THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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2 CORINTHIANS 5-6

Author, Jay Strack, writes about a NBA basketball game he once attended. The game ended strangely. Dallas Maverick's point-guard, Derek Harper, dribbled the final six seconds off the clock. He thought his team was up by a point. Actually, the game was tied. Dallas could've used the wasted time to win the game. They ended up losing in overtime. Strack wrote afterwards, "[Dribble, dribble, dribble go the seconds - the minutes, the hours, the days, the years of our lives.](#)" How often have you dribbled away valuable seconds you could've used to win the game? You could've won the prize of knowing Christ... You could've won a reward for serving God... You could've won lost souls to Jesus Christ... instead we dribbled away the seconds. It was like we had *time to waste* instead of a *game to win!* Paul's goal in tonight's chapters is to help us avoid this mistake. In 2 Corinthians 5 Paul has sights set on eternity! He's focused on the judgment seat of Christ. And he encourages us not to waste a single second!

Chapter 5 begins, "[For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens](#)" During Paul's stay in Corinth he made tents. Here he compares a tent to our human bodies. Both are temporary dwellings - both are fragile and flimsy.

I know a lot of you like to camp, *but not me!* I like to camp, once every five years in a nice hotel. My problem isn't sleeping under the stars, or enjoying the outdoors - I just hate all the effort that goes into camping. You pack up, and set up, and tear down. To me camping is a hassle - *and so is my body.* Think of the time, and energy, and money I waste maintaining my body. For starters I have to refuel it three times a day. *My car runs a week on a full tank...* You also have to park your body for a few hours each night... A body requires frequent oil changes... A daily wash and wax... And to top it all off you're constantly driving it into the mechanic for repairs... And what really upsets me most about my body is I have to drag it with me everywhere I go. My body is like a tent. A lot of time, and effort, and energy, and money goes into its upkeep. *Bodies are a hassle.*

Paul says that one day we'll swap these temporary, troublesome tents for more permanent structures. We've been promised "[a building from God.](#)" When Jesus returns for His Church, at the rapture, you'll receive a new, eternal body - a body made from elements not subject to decay or deterioration. You're heavenly body won't have to be refueled, or rested, or repaired. You're eternal body won't be set up or torn down! In your new body you'll be able to take all your time, energy, money - and spend it worshipping Jesus. One day our spirits we'll be given the keys to hassle-free housing. We'll get glorified bodies!

Once a family who had a little ritual they conducted whenever one of the children's pet goldfish died. Mom, dad, brother, and sister would gather around the commode. Three year-old, Drew, would hold the fish - and five year-old Alexis would say a prayer. Then both kids would flush the fish to heaven. On one such solemn occasion, after the goldfish had been sent to heaven the little girl asked her mom if grandpa,

who had died several years earlier, was also in heaven. The mom said confidently, "Yes, he is!" That's when the little boy asked, "*who flushed him?*" When the Lord returns for His Church we'll all flush these bodies, and receive new and perfect bodies.

"For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked." The philosophy of Greek culture viewed the body as evil - as totally and completely unredeemable. Epictetus said he was, "a poor soul burdened with a corpse." Seneca called himself "a slave of the body." The Greek hope for the afterlife was to be free from the body - be a disembodied spirit. But Paul tells us God has a greater plan! He's going to transform our mortal bodies into eternal bodies. We'll be resurrected.

"For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life." God's redemption is not complete until every trace of sin is blotted out - including its effect on our bodies. If you were in a car wreck, and all the insurance paid for was to repair the engine you'd be disappointed. How about some body-work? Well, God is not only a mechanic, He also has a body shop. He's not only an expert under the hood - purifying and sanctifying and energizing - He also does redesigns wrecked bodies!

Paul says in verse 5, "Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee (or downpayment)." The *spiritual life* we receive is earnest money on the *spiritual body* we'll be given. The presence of the Holy Spirit *in us* means there's more to come *for us*.

"So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight." Paul longs and "*groans*" for his eternal body. Imagine a body that doesn't sag, or get sick, or become tired! The older I get the more I groan for my new bod.

Yet here's my current dilemma... I've been given great hope, but every morning I drag out of bed, and see the same old mug staring back at him in the mirror. How do I confidently hope for a new body, while I deal with the deterioration of an old body? The answer is faith! As Paul puts it, "*we walk by faith, not by sight.*" People use the expression, "*blind faith,*" but faith isn't blind - faith sees more than eyesight. Sight is limited to the temporal and touchable - its incapable of seeing the eternal and the spiritual. Sight can't see things like love, and hope, and God - but faith sees them clearly. We hold on to all God's promises by faith!

Here's Paul's faith, "*We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*" Two passages - 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 - teach us that believers will have to wait until the rapture to enjoy our new bodies. Yet the moment *the spirit of a believer* departs from his earthly tent he immediately finds himself in the presence of the Lord. The notion of "*soul sleep*" - that the soul hibernates until the resurrection is not biblical. The moment we die our spirit is with the Lord.

Verse 9, "*Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*" The term Paul uses, "*judgment seat*" is a translation of the Greek word, "*bema.*" The "*bema-seat*" was the platform in Greek towns where officials made important announcements. From the *bema-seat* rewards were handed out, and decisions were handed down. And one day every believer will

stand before the *"bema-seat of Christ"* for the same purpose. Don't confuse the *Great White Throne of Judgment* with the *Judgment Seat of Christ*. Revelation 20 speaks of the white throne where the lost will be judged, condemned, and thrown into the lake of fire. It's for unbelievers, while the bema is for Christians. Our place in heaven is secured by the blood of Jesus, but our service for the Lord will be tried to see what rewards we'll receive. Our motive will be judged.

It reminds me of the widow who was furious over the fact that her husband had bequeathed all his money to his secretary. His own wife had been cut out of his will. She rushed to the graveyard to have the inscription on his tombstone changed, but she arrived too late. She hated spending her own money on a brand new tombstone. She figured it would be cheaper to have the undertaker just carve an addendum. Right after *"Rest in Peace"* she had him chisel, *"Until we Meet Again."* Hey, each of us will meet again. One day, we'll meet around the bema-seat and Jesus will judge what we did for Him with our lives? Did we serve with sincerity? In that day, our motives will be measured!

Verse 11, *"Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."* Here's Paul's thought... In Christ there's no need for a Christian to be afraid of standing before God. We wear His righteousness. But we should fear for those who don't know Jesus. The last place an unredeemed sinner wants to be is in the presence of a Holy God. His holiness is terrifying when our guilt is exposed. You'll quiver uncontrollably.

This is why Paul is determined to preach. He says in verse 11, *"we persuade men, but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences."* Paul lives with integrity not to earn God's approval, but to earn the right to be heard by sinners. Paul was saved by grace through faith. He wasn't trying to prove anything to God - the Lord knew His heart... *And so should the Corinthians...* They also knew the purity of his heart and his intentions.

He writes, *"For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart."* Paul says the legitimacy of his ministry is proven by the motivation of his heart. Whereas, his critics in Corinth relied on appearance. They were all about the right persona and image. Paul didn't worry about *looking-good* in the eyes of people. He was all about *being-good* before God. History tells us Paul was barely five feet tall. He had a hunched back, hooked nose, bowed legs - and his thick eyebrows ran together across his forehead. His eyes were often infected, and bulging with puss. In addition, his body was tattooed with the scars of his beatings and stonings. Paul would never make the cover of GQ magazine. He was a walking illustration that in ministry its heart *not appearance* that matters! Yet the false teachers in Corinth were just the opposite. They looked like FCA leaders - the big men on campus - muscular, rugged good-looking jocks. These guys tried hard to be cool. They were the hipsters - *tall on appearance, but short on substance*. They wore designers jeans, and put product in their hair. In the final analysis they were more about *marketing than ministering*. *All hype and no holiness*.

In contrast to their emphasis on image, folks thought Paul was nuts, and he did little to change their minds. He says in verse 13, *"For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you."* In other words, *"If you think I'm crazy just remember I'm crazy for God, and if you think I'm sane and right on, remember I want you to follow my example."* Either way, Paul didn't take an opinion poll before he acted. You'd never catch Paul strategizing his decisions based on their political correctness. He didn't give a rip what people thought of *him*. He lived to point people to Jesus. He only wanted to bring glory to His Lord.

Paul reveals the motive of his ministry in verse 14, "For the love of Christ compels us..." The reason Paul endured intense suffering, persecution, rejection was the love of Christ. He knew how much the Lord loved him, and he wanted to love the Lord Jesus in return.

Notice so far in Chapter 5 Paul mentions three motivations for serving Jesus: **rewards, fear, and love**. All three are powerful motivators - but without a doubt the highest and holiest incentive is love! Knowing in your heart of hearts that Jesus loves you, died for you, rose for you, cares for you - this is what captivates and dominates a person's heart, and causes them to go anywhere, do anything for Jesus' sake. A person motivated by the love of Christ is like the Ever Ready bunny - he keeps going and going... If you're tank is full of love you'll never run out of gas.

Paul says, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died..." Here's a truth about our salvation, when Jesus died we died with Him. Our sin nature was crucified. Think of it like "copy and paste." My computer allows me to copy text from one document and paste it into another. And God can also "copy and paste..." Spiritually, He copied you in the 21st century, and pasted you on the cross alongside Jesus in the 1st century. You now share in all that Jesus accomplished. When Jesus died *the old you* died with Him.

Paul continues, "and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." Through Christ we've died to old desires. We're a brand, new person. God gives every Christian a new identity, a new nature, a new disposition, a new love, a new purpose, even a new power - and He figures the least we can do is embrace this new life, and live it to the fullest...

Verse 16, "Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer." This an incredibly significant verse with revolutionary implications. It'll change your life. Paul uses Jesus as an example... On earth the disciples knew Jesus as a man. We related to him physically, tangibly. Even today we picture His human traits - Middle Eastern features, black hair, a Jewish nose. His humanness enabled His disciples to identify Him on the street and follow Him. But now that He's ascended to heaven we relate to Jesus spiritually. His former appearance is longer that significant. The fact that He was with us is theologically important, but the specifics - *His height, weight, facial features, physique* - are no longer a vital issue.

This is why God didn't provide us photographs or portraits of Jesus. That omission was very intentional. God is teaching us a new way to view one another. Since we've all become new people in Christ why focus any longer on the outward person? Why not look beneath the surface. As best as we can, God wants us to look past the body and relate to folks spiritually.

And the first way to apply this principle is personally. Why get bummed about your appearance? The real you is not the outer person, but the inner person. This body is just a tent. It's a temporary shell that cracks and weathers. I'm more than this outer shell. *The real me is the nut inside!* In God's eyes I'm a delicious nut. This is how we all should see ourselves. Years ago, I ran across a revealing quote by super model, Carole Mallory. She said, "Everywhere I went my figure followed. But I learned I am not my figure." You're looks are not you. You're personhood involves more than how fit you are, or how smart you are, or how athletic you are - the real person is who you are deep down inside. You are what you are spiritually.

And here's another way we men can apply Paul's people principle... Next time we see a super model - a pretty girl - remember we're not looking at the girl. The real person is underneath the wrapping paper. In reality, she might be a lonely, sad, vindictive, ugly person. She's definitely a soul in need of Jesus. But Paul's point is to learn to see ourselves and other people in terms of who they are in Christ. *So you're overweight!* Sure, keep working on it, but don't get bummed out - the *real you* is the *new you*... *You're transformed* through the work of Christ - fit for God's Kingdom - God loves you! You're *body* is just a pup tent. And one day you'll trade it in on a mansion!

Thus, Paul writes triumphantly, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Realize a Christian is a new species of creature, that prior to the first century, had never roamed this planet. You might have friends who believe aliens are coming to earth... well, they're already here. In Christ Jesus we're the aliens. This world is not our home.

We're a miracle of mercy - God's special creation. We're the first humans since the fall not to possess a sin nature. Our old man was crucified with Christ! We represent a new start for mankind. God planted in our hearts a love for Him and a love for others. We're capable of what no one before us could do - we can grow spiritually, and live victoriously over our sin. As believers in Jesus we're the envy of the angels. We make the Hebrews jealous. We're new creations.

Verse 18, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ..." Notice God doesn't need to be reconciled to us. He loves us. He's for us. He'll forgive us. It's man that's at war with God. We need to find peace with God. It reminds me of the guy who changed careers - from *retail sales* to *police work*. Several months after the transition, he explained the move, "I prefer being a cop. The pay is fine, the hours better, but most of all I love a job where the customer is always wrong." And we're the ones who're always wrong - not God. We're the ones who sin, and need to be reconciled.

And Jesus made this possible on the cross. He died to resolve the differences between sinful man and God. Through Christ God reconciles us to Himself - "and (He) has given us the ministry of reconciliation..." Notice, Jesus unites us to God - then sets us on a mission of bringing other people to Him. When God reconciles us, He makes us a minister of reconciliation.

He continues, "That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." Here's a mind-blower. This a phenomenal truth... On the cross God was in Christ *dying to save us*, but now God is in you *pleading for men to be saved!*

We're "*ambassadors for Christ*" - divine diplomats. We're God's spokespeople. Like a foreign envoy sent to another country. We speak declarations from home in a way the locals can hear and understand. As "*ambassadors of Christ*" we convey the message of heaven in a way earthly ears can hear and grasp. And this involves two equal priorities... We need to be *faithful to the message*, while *flexible with our methods*. *Relatable culturally*, but *reliable spiritually*. True to the message, but shrewd with the delivery.

And Paul adds, verse 21, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus was the sinless sacrifice. He knew no sin. He was the spotless Lamb. Yet at the cross the full weight of *every grimy act* done in *every slimy place* - was suddenly thrust on Jesus' sinless shoulders. He was made sin who knew no sin - so we could become the righteousness of

God. Jesus became all that's wrong with fallen mankind, so we could become all that's right in a holy God. What a message! Nothing is more deserving of our max effort than to communicate the Gospel effectively. As ambassadors of Christ we're like an interpreter. A good interpreter is fluent in two languages - what he hears and what he speaks. And God has made us His interpreters. [Let's be both faithful to the message of Scripture, and fluent in the language of culture.](#)

Chapter 6, "We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain." Remember God was in Christ dying to save the world, now God is in us pleading for men to be saved. We not only *work for Jesus*, but we *work with Him*. And here Paul "*pleads*" with the Corinthians "*not to receive the grace of God in vain.*" Don't receive grace without growing in grace. Take advantage of the favor, and access, and blessings God's grace affords us!

"For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Not next month - or even next moment - but now is the time to receive God's grace. The peak season for salvation is right this second!

Keep in mind salvation is a seasonal business. Like beach toys and Christmas ornaments there're only certain times of the year when a product gets sold. Likewise, "*now is the day of salvation...*" When time ends and eternity begins you'll no longer be able to obtain salvation. Today though shelves are stocked. Business is brisk. *God needs help behind the counter!*

I use to work in a grocery store, and there was a rule... If customers were stacking up at the registers, even if you were on break or at lunch, you got back to work immediately. We never made the customer wait. This is why today God is calling for all His people to come to the front of the store! We've got customers trying to checkout, and they need to be told the gospel. And when I talk about the day "*time ends and eternity begins,*" I'm not just speaking of the day when Jesus returns. Time ends and eternity begins every day for millions of people who die and meet their Maker. Right this second, people all over the globe are checking out, and they desperately need Jesus.

You hear a lot of talk today about "[near-death experiences.](#)" Folks see bright lights and walk down long tunnels. Well, I hate to burst your bubble, but that's not what you're going to see when you really die. *Near-death experience* isn't *really-dead experience*. C.S. Lewis describes what we'll see the first moment we die, "[There will be God without disguise: something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we have really chosen, whether we realized it or not. Now, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It won't last forever. We must take it or leave it.](#)" This is why now is the day of salvation. *Everyone to the check-outs! We got customers!*

Verse 3, "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed." Some ministries do more harm than good. They turn folks off through carnal or archaic methods. The Gospel will offend by its very nature - we don't want to offend unnecessarily.

"But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God..." A typical church member doesn't realize the sacrifices and difficulties a pastor faces. Pastor James served as an elder at CCSM for nearly a decade before he came on staff as Assistant Pastor. I recall a few months in, he told me, "[I had no idea what all you go through. I thought I did, but I didn't.](#)" The Corinthians didn't realize all Paul had endured

to bring them the Gospel. It's been said, "A ministry that costs nothing, accomplishes nothing." And in the next few verses Paul itemizes the price he's paid in ministry.

He begins with the **pressures in ministry** - "in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses..." He continues with the **persecutions found in ministry** - "in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults," Then the **passion he put into his ministry** - the willing sacrifices... "in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings," Followed by the godly **principles and priorities of ministry** - "by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left..."

Finally Paul mentions a few **paradoxes within ministry** - "by honor and dishonor..." It's odd how people treat me when they discover I'm a pastor. Some people show instant respect, others instant disdain. "By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report..." Against the backdrop of today's culture, the Bible is confrontational. It's impossible for me to stand and teach honestly without ruffling some feathers. Not a week goes by that I don't make someone mad. Every message I preach ends in a split decision - some folks call it a good report. Other people get offended. "As deceivers, and yet true..." Not only do I teach, but I'm also called to lead. Those who like the direction I set will believe that I'm sincere and seeking God. Those who disagree conclude I'm just a phony. But every decision is met with controversy. "As unknown, and yet well known..." Everybody knows I'm "Pastor Sandy" - but they forget I'm Kathy's "honey" - I'm "dad" to seven kids now - I'm "G-daddy" to two grandkids - I'm even a "pastor" to pastors. Everybody knows I'm "Pastor Sandy," but few people remember I've got a life outside what I do for them.

Here's a paradox, "As dying, and behold we live..." We die to our pride, while God's life swells up in us. "As chastened, and yet not killed..." God allows the pastor to taste tough times. He disciplines the pastor. And what doesn't kill him makes him better. Verse 10, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing..." Ministry is full of highs and lows. I can get my heart broken by a person I trusted, then seconds later have the joy of leading a man to Christ. You've got to persist. Here's another irony, "As poor, yet making many rich..." Often a pastor draws a meager salary, all the while he helps others grab hold of spiritual riches. "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Your bank account might hover near zero, but if you serve the Lord you're laying up treasure in heaven.

Paul's discussion about ministry wasn't him tooting his own horn. The Corinthians have questioned him. Paul just wanted his friends in Corinth to know what he'd endure for their sake. Like all humans he needed to be respected, and have his efforts appreciated. And I gotta tell you I know how Paul feels. Been there, don't that, and got the T-shirt. The toughest times in ministry are when folks criticize what they see, while you're making sacrifices they can't see. They don't trust your heart or appreciate your effort. It's not right - It's not fair - but neither was the cross. Several years ago I came under attack from a group of critics within our church. I'll never forget going to my dad for advice and spilling my guts, "Dad, you'd think that after 13 years I wouldn't have to prove myself." I'll never forget what dad told me. He said, "Sandy, in this world, you've got to prove yourself every day!" And that's true. Paul didn't have to prove himself to Jesus, but he had to prove himself to people every day.

Paul continues in verse 11, "O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open." In other words, "We've been spilling our guts to you." "You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections." Paul says stop blaming me. I'm not a problem. You're causing your own problems.

One night I was listening to the Dr. Laura show on the radio. A caller was talking about the problems her parents were *having* - when Dr. Laura jumped in and corrected her, "**No, the problems they are *creating*.**" She explained that when a tornado demolishes your house - you *have a problem*. But when you act selfishly, and make bad choices you *create a problem!* There's a difference between *having* and *creating* difficult circumstances. And Paul is saying the Corinthians were creators of their trouble, not victims.

Verse 13, "**Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.**" He's saying, "**Ok, I've been honest with you - now, you be honest with me!**" "**Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.**" Here's a crucial biblical principle... The imagery is that of a plough pulled by two oxen. The necks of the animals are in a wooden harness, or yoke. The yoke is constructed to force the oxen to work together. It causes pain if one oxen doesn't cooperate with the other. The yoke chokes the one who pulls ahead and pinches the one who lags behind. The restrictiveness of the yoke forces teamwork. Thus, it's easier on the animals to yoke together two of the same breed. Mix a donkey with an ox, and you insure friction and frustration. Different species have different natures that pull apart and fight each other. Likewise, a believer and unbeliever are separate species - different breeds with different natures. A believer is born of God - alive to the things of the Spirit. Whereas the unbeliever, though a nice person, is still dead in sin, and unaware of God's Spirit. Put these two breeds in the same yoke - *a marriage, a business, a roommate situation, a serious dating relationship* - and it'll produce long term frustration. At first, the two parties might work well together, but over time they'll inevitably move in separate directions. They'll pinch or choke the other. The yoke causes pain.

Paul asks five rhetorical questions, "**For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial?**" "*Belial*" means "**worthless**" and was an ancient epithet for Satan. "**Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?**" Some stuff just don't mix... *oil and water, honey and vinegar, drinking and driving, hot days and chocolate bars, water and electricity, Bulldogs and Gators, sunshine and homework...* **believers and unbelievers!** Chapter 5 calls to be an ambassador for Christ. That means we need to speak the language and relate culturally. We can't withdraw from the world and still be ministers of reconciliation. But neither can we become overly involved, and end up in vexed by the world. It's one thing to have *contact* - it's another to enter a *contract!* We can *interact* - but we step over a lethal line when we get too *intertwined* and *interconnected*.

Paul adds one more question in verse 16, "**And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."** We're God's kids. That's why it's often said, "**If a child of God marries a child of the devil, then the child of God is sure to have some trouble with his father-in-law.**" And that's more true than you know. I could fill a five gallon bucket with the tears I've had shed in my office by people who experienced the pain of being married to an unbeliever. Nothing is as agonizing, and complex, and taxing on a Christian as being married to someone who doesn't share their most basic, heartfelt allegiance to Jesus. There's a road sign at the beginning of the Alaskan Highway. It reads, "**Choose your rut carefully, you'll be in it for the next 200 miles.**" And if you're a single Christian dating an unbeliever that road sign is for you. Give serious thought to the person you marry. And let me add one more thought. It's just my conviction, but you can't refute its truthfulness, "**You'll never marry an unbeliever if you never date one.**"

Chapter 6:17 quotes Isaiah 52, "**Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.**" In our interactions with the world we need balance. Don't *isolate* yourself from the world, but neither should you *assimilate* values and relationships. We need a healthy

mix... *friendship with sinners*, but *fellowship with saints*. Remember 1 Corinthians 15:33, "*Evil company corrupts good habits.*" *Hang out* with bad people and you'll eventually get *hung out* to dry. A mom tried to teach this lesson to her sons. She was in the garden and held up her white gloves. She said, "*Boys, notice when I stick these gloves in the dirt, the gloves become dirty, the dirt doesn't get glovey.*" Don't let the folks you're lifting up - drag you down.