

## “Are You Serious …?” // 2 Corinthians 6–7 // God’s Power in Broken Vessels #8<sup>1</sup> // Th7

### Announcement

Church, before we open the Word, I want to invite you into something that sits at the very core of who we are.

Every year around this time, we begin the **21 Days of Prayer and Fasting**. We’ve done this for several years now, and here’s why: When I think of what defines us as a church, I know there are a lot of things people could point to—our ministries, our worship, our teaching, big events like CATD ... but what I most **want** them to say is, “THEY are a people of prayer.”

This season isn’t about asking God to bless our plans, it’s about slowing down long enough to ask, “God, what do you want?” and then LISTENING. Because—listen—what GOD wants to do in us is far more important than what WE want to do this year. Amen?

I look forward to these 21 days every year, because every year God reveals something to me, and I know that no matter where you are in your faith, you will leave these 21 days with a more profound sense of who God is. Isn’t that something you want?

I’d love for everyone to participate in the fast in some way. I’m not saying you go 21 days without food—we’re saying you intentionally skip several meals in these 21 days to pray. And, btw, I know some of you may not be able to physically skip ANY meals. And that’s ok. There are other ways to engage in this. Your campus pastors will share more details about how you can be involved in these 21 days of prayer later in the service. For now, I just want you to know it’s coming and to be ready to jump in.

Also ... one quick flyover—you might have seen this in the little 5B4 video at the start of the service—but a couple of years ago we’d planned to go to Israel and had to postpone because of “events” in the Middle East.

Well, we’ve gotten the all-clear and so the trip is back on for this summer. It’s safe—in fact, it’s an ideal time to go because the tourism rush hasn’t fully caught back up yet. Me and Veronica are going and would love to have you join us. Spots are extremely limited right now, only about 50 spots left, so if this interests you, you may want to jump on it. **Text ISRAEL to 33933**. (Some of you have asked, “Well, will we ever do this again?” Maybe. I

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<sup>1</sup> Sources consulted: Eric Mason, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 2 Corinthians*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2024); Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians*. Gary Millar, *2 Corinthians for You* (London, UK: The Good Book Company, 2020); Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians* (London, UK: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004); John Piper, “[The Good End of Godly Regret](#),” Bethlehem Baptist Church, December 30, 1984; Skip Heitzig, “[2 Cor 6:1-7:1](#),” sermon preached at Calvary Church, February 8, 2023; Skip Heitzig, “[2 Corinthians 7](#)”, March 8, 2023, Calvary Church; C. John (Jack) Miller, *Saving Grace* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2014). David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*. [bradhambrick.com](#); Tony Merida, “A Holy Community,” 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; and “How God Brings Comfort and Joy to the Downcast,” 2 Corinthians 7:2-16. Tim Keller, “You are My Friends,” John 15. Redeemer Presbyterian. Larry Hurtado, *Destroyer of Gods*. And others as noted throughout.

don't know. I'm sure at some point we'll do it again, but it's certainly not an every year thing. It's kind of a once-in-a-lifetime trip—to go with your church family to walk the places where Jesus walked and experience it all firsthand, so you should pray about it and take advantage of it.)

**OK ... 2 Cor 6–7 if you have your Bibles, and would you stand with me for the reading of God's Word?**

## Introduction

6:1 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain...

7:8 For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. 9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. And vs 16 I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.

**Leader: This is the Word of God for the people of God.**

**People: Thanks be to God.**

This past summer Veronica and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary, so I wanted to get her a little piece of jewelry to reward her for sticking with me for that long, because I can't imagine having to be married to me for 25 years. So I went out shopping for one and had to get caught back up on how to shop for a diamond, something I haven't really had to think about for 26 years. A lot has changed in the diamond market since I shopped for Veronica's engagement ring back in the 1900s.

Diamonds, as you might remember, are evaluated according to the "Four Cs": **Carat**, which refers to the diamond's weight; **Cut**, which affects not only the shape of the diamond but the sparkle; **Color**, which experts rank from D (which is colorless) to Z (which is light yellow or brown—and let me tell you, you can get those Z diamonds for quite a discount); finally, there's **Clarity**, which measures the amount of flaws and blemishes.

But nowadays, because of the improvements in lab-grown diamonds (which are amazing, btw!), if having a naturally grown diamond is important to you, you have to look beyond the 4 Cs. An expert has to examine the internal structure of the diamond to tell you if it's authentic and natural grown. It's the inward structure, not the sparkle, that determines authenticity.

Paul's concern in 2 Corinthians is helping the Corinthians distinguish the authentic from the sparkle, and he says that is going to have a lot to do with inward formation. Up until this point in the book, Paul has primarily applied that grid to church leadership—showing the Corinthians how to

distinguish true apostles from fake ones. He's said it has less to do with the flashiness of their gifting and more to do with their inward conformity to Christ.

Now, in chapters 6–7, Paul turns the focus of this question onto the Corinthians themselves, and he gives them a series of tests, so to speak, to determine if their spirituality is real. How to tell the authentic from the fake. (Btw, when I say “fake,” I don’t mean just blatant hypocrite.) I’m not talking about people who got plastered last night and are in church today like nothing happened. No, Paul is talking about the self-deceived, people who are active in church, who think things are great—but he’s saying when you peel back the layers, you’ll find that their spirituality was not genuine. Turns out that spirituality is something easy to imitate, even to the point you can deceive yourself:

See, look at how Paul opens these chapters:

6:1... We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. In other words, it’s possible to “receive” the grace of God in vain. It’s possible to encounter the grace of God in a way that never actually changes you. To never go beyond an initial interest in Christianity to true transformation. Jump to chapter 7 and I’ll show you the first test:

### 1. Is your repentance real? (7:10–13)

In vs 10, Paul distinguishes between a godly kind of grief that leads to life and a worldly grief that leads only to death. You say, “What’s the difference?”

Well, the first thing to notice is that godly grief leads to actual life change. See what Paul says in vs 11? “... see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you (earnestness—their godly grief gave them a holy resolve to actually change their behavior—remember, they had gotten sideways with Paul and had rejected his teaching) but also what eagerness to clear yourselves (in other words, they really wanted to show their loyalty to Paul), what indignation, (indignation toward the people who had caused the relational rift between them and Paul and incensed with themselves for going along with those people) what fear, what longing, what zeal (in other words, they were *motivated* to change!) what punishment (which just means they did what it took to take care of the problem).

This was true change, and it all came from “godly grief.” Counselors call this “productive sorrow.”<sup>2</sup> The clear implication is that not all sorrow over sin is godly sorrow—and it’s got nothing to do with the amount of the tears, which is how we always measure authenticity. But Paul doesn’t say, “Godly grief cries a lot and worldly grief is fairly stoic.”

Surely you’ve seen people who get caught in some sin who express a lot of emotion and regret and self-hatred and they make all kinds of promises to change, but then the situation changes—the threat of consequences or punishments goes away—and they go back to their old ways. I’ve seen

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<sup>2</sup> Kent Hughes

situations where one marriage partner for years ignores any plea from their spouse to change—they don't want to go to counseling or get help—but then their spouse declares they're leaving, and suddenly they are like, "What have I got to do? I'll do anything. Please don't leave me." And they cry and say, "I've taken you for granted," and they plead and make promises. And they get on their best behavior. And it looks sincere so the first spouse says, "OK, I'll give you another chance," but then, a few months later, after the threat of divorce has died down, they go back to their old ways. Their tears of repentance weren't true sorrow over sin, only fear of being left. Now, in saying that, I'm not trying to be cynical—or to say that this always happens. In fact, I've witnessed a number of times where the partner truly changes. I'm just saying that sometimes this happens. You've probably seen it.

So, **How do you tell godly grief from worldly grief?** Christian counselors say this is a *crucial* distinction, and again, it's got nothing to do with intensity of emotion. It has to do with the direction and object of your sorrow.

In short, I'd say it this way: **GODLY grief is focused on what your sin did to God (or someone else); WORLDLY grief is focused on what your sin did to you.**

Worldly grief is upset about the pain that sin brought into your own life; godly grief is upset about the pain your sin brought to someone else's life.

Worldly grief says, "This sin makes me feel like a bad person, and I don't like feeling like a bad person." Godly grief says, "My sin hurt you, and I don't want to hurt you."

This is especially true when it comes to repentance toward God. Remember (we saw this in chapter 5): **Paul described the essence of Christianity as reconciliation.** Gospel preaching is the ministry of reconciliation. When you become a Christian, you are reconciled, relationally, to God. You are the prodigal child returning home to the arms of the Father you had rejected, the Father who had always been good to you, whose arms had always been wide open to you. And you spurned him. And you're brokenhearted about breaking his heart.

Godly grief always has a measure of faith in it—because, you see, the more you perceive the love of God for you, the more genuine your sadness will be over what your sin did to God. **Tim Keller** says, "There are two ways to repent: One is to come to God and say how sorry you are to the Great Sovereign King of the universe and thank him for not blasting you off the earth. (But, honestly [he says] that won't help you all that much.) A better approach is to realize that though in Christ your sins are forgiven, as Jesus' friend, your sins hurt him much worse than an enemy's would. Imagine Jesus saying to you after you commit some sin, 'If my enemy had done this to me, that would be one thing—but you, my friend? Look at all I've done for you ... How could you treat me this way?' Don't you see? [says Keller] There is repentance that creates crushing guilt, and there is repentance that creates melting grief."<sup>3</sup>

I love that last phrase: *crushing guilt* or *melting grief*. Crushing guilt is worldly sorrow. Melting grief is godly sorrow.

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, "You are My Friends," John 15. Redeemer Presbyterian.

Here's a little chart I put together that maybe you'll find helpful:

	Worldly Grief	Godly Grief
Primary Focus	Self	God and others
Core Question	"What did this cost me?"	"Whom have I wounded?"
View of Sin	An embarrassment or failure	A relational rupture
Response to Exposure	Defensiveness, blame-shifting, attacking  Because worldly grief is focused on itself, it does a lot of image management and blaming others for your sin. You make excuses for your sin, or try to show that you were really the victim here: <i>"Sure, you made some mistakes, but that's only because others have been worse to you. It's your spouse's fault, your parents fault; your boss's fault. You got dropped as a kid."</i> I'm not saying none of those factors are relevant or they can't be discussed; I'm just saying that the FOCUS of godly sorrow is on YOUR sin how your sin hurt the person or the God you sinned against.	Confession, ownership, clarity

Trajectory	Inward (rumination)	Outward (reconciliation)
End Result	Death in the form of (isolation, hardening, or despair)	Life (repentance, reconciliation, hope and change)

So much of the sorrow we see expressed in our culture today is worldly sorrow. People say things like, “I can’t believe I did this.” Or, “I can never forgive myself.” These things sound humble and contrite, but they show the person is still focused on themselves. Or they say, “It’s not me. I’m a victim. I had childhood trauma.”

The Bible provides us with a lot of examples of worldly grief.

- Cain, after he killed his brother, Abel, was terrified of the consequences of his sin and pleaded with God for a second chance. And yet, he never expressed any sadness over what he’d done to his brother or any sadness toward God about how he’d forsaken the God who had been so good to him.
- Or Esau, after he’d traded away his birthright for a pot of soup, begged God—through tears—to get it back, and yet he never lamented how little he valued his relationship with God and how willing he’d been to throw it away for a quick thrill.

Both of these guys were sad about the consequences of their sins, but not brokenhearted about hurting and dishonoring the God who had reconciled himself to them.

The best biblical contrast of worldly and godly grief, however, is Judas and Peter. Think, for a minute, about how similar their sins were: Both betrayed Christ on the night that he died. And it wasn’t like Judas’ sin was a lot worse; both forsook and denied Christ. And both wept bitter tears of regret because of it. And yet, Judas ended up committing suicide, and Jesus’ verdict on his life was, “It would have been better for that man for him never to have been born.” Peter, on the other hand, went on not only to find forgiveness, but to be commissioned as the most important leader of Jesus’ church.

Why the difference? It had nothing to do with who sinned worse or who cried more. It had to do with the direction of their sadness. Judas stayed focused on himself; Peter focused on the precious, faithful Savior he’d hurt, the Savior who had always been his friend, who’d gone to a cross to reconcile himself to him.

**Godly grief always begins in faith.** Our own director of counseling, **Brad Hambrick, says:** “Repentance does not begin with remorse. If that were the case, then we would say the cure for guilt begins with feeling worse. Repentance begins with a genuine … trust in God’s character. Repentance begins with the belief that what God wants for us is what is best.”

Or as another one of my favorite authors, **Jack Miller**, says, “**There is nothing more dangerous than grieving over your sins without faith in Christ.**<sup>4</sup>

So let me ask: Which kind of repentance have you had?

- Did your repentance produce lasting change?
- Did your repentance move you toward God or away from him?<sup>5</sup>
- By the way, in our G4 groups, which help people through crisis and addiction and trauma, this is a central concept. If you’re struggling through this, you should consider going. Just Google “G4 Summit Church” and you’ll find everything you need. (By the way, you have to say, “CHURCH,” G4 Summit Church—if you just google “G4 Summit,” you’ll find yourself in the middle of a discussion about the security council of the UN.)

So Paul’s first question is, “Was your repentance real?” But let’s keep moving, because Paul gives us a second question:

## 2. What influences are you surrounding yourself with? (6:14–7:1)

6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? (That, by the way, is a reference to Satan. It literally means “the worthless one.” Isn’t that a great name for Satan? The “worthless one”) Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.  
17 Therefore go out from their midst,  
and be separate from them, says the Lord,  
and touch no unclean thing;  
then I will welcome you,  
18 and I will be a father to you,  
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,  
says the Lord Almighty.”

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<sup>4</sup> Jack Miller, *Saving Grace*, 131

<sup>5</sup> After sin, our pride or fear causes us to hide from God rather than talk to him (Genesis 3:8). Too often we think that a directionless sense of regret for sin is the same thing as repenting to God. That’s not repentance; it’s wallowing. It’s not a conversation; it’s a shame-based reflection.

7:1, Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

The first thing to notice here is that Paul says God has called his people to be different. Radically different. Literally, **vs 17, “come out from among them and be separate.”**

The authentic Christian life is hard because it's countercultural. The historian Larry Hurtado, in his book **Destroyer of the Gods**, explains that despite being fiercely persecuted the early church grew rapidly, and that was because they were completely distinct from Roman society in five ways, ways which both infuriated and attracted other Romans.

- **First, they were doggedly committed to the poor and the marginalized.** (One Roman emperor, I've told you, Julian the Apostate, said in disgust, "The followers of that wretched Galilean take care not only of their own poor but our poor too. Wherever there is a thriving Christian community in our Empire, poverty in that place disappears."<sup>6</sup>)
- **Second, they were committed to forgiveness and reconciliation.** Christians were NOT the only group persecuted by the Roman Empire—not by a long shot—but they were the only group who sought to love, bless and forgive in response.
- **Third, their church communities spanned classes and ethnicities.** (The Roman Empire had brought to the world these large metropolitan cities—for the first time in history, people of vastly different cultures lived and worked together and that, of course, led to all kinds of social strife and class warfare. Churches were the only places where the different classes and ethnicities got along; they called each other brother and sister and treated each other as equals. That was both attractive and repulsive.)
- **Fourth, they were strongly pro-life.** (This is fascinating: Abortion and infanticide were big things in Rome—they didn't have the morning after murder pill, so if a Roman had an unwanted baby, they'd simply leave them on the doorstep and the trash collector would come by in the morning and take away the dead body of the baby; Christians became famous for these things called baby runs. They'd go out at night and listen for the cry of babies and take them into their own homes and raise them.)
- **Fifth, they had counter-cultural sexual ethics.** The whole one man and one woman in marriage thing was wildly counter-cultural in Rome.<sup>7</sup>

Now, I'd say that's still a pretty good list for how we're different, right? And when we live these things out, we are both appealing to outsiders and infuriating at the same time.

- For example, (#5) We believe Jesus is Lord over everything. I'll say it plainly: God created two genders, male and female; that's something he assigns at birth that you can't change, and he designed marriage to be the only place the two different genders come together sexually, and that's the only place he intends sex to happen. Sex is not about your preferences or your desires. And when I preach that, it infuriates some people. (I know; I get the letters!) AND YET, right now in the UK and US, there is a phenomenon of Gen Z coming back into church—especially young men—and one of the reasons sociologists say it is happening is the bewilderment created by all the gender confusion and forced woke ideology. THERE'S A GENERATION SAYING, "This can't be right; this is insane," and they're finding a different story in Bible-teaching churches, and

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<sup>6</sup> My paraphrase

<sup>7</sup> Rome was sexually libertarian. Augustine said that Romans would give almost no one their money but let just about anyone in their beds. Christians, by contrast, he said, let no one in their beds but gave everyone their money.

that's appealing. Our message on these things is both infuriating and appealing, and I'm not changing it—because what's popular in culture changes, but Jesus never does and so we're going to stick with him.

- Or take #3 on the list: We seek unity in diversity at our church. By the way, I haven't had a chance to tell you this yet: We hit a big goal at the end of last year that we've been working on for about seven years. Seven years ago we set a goal to become 25 percent diverse by 2025. We called it 25x25. At the time we were only like 16 percent. For seven years we've been working toward it and not hit it. Well, in the survey we took at the end of 2025, we crossed it. Snuck it in at the buzzer. We're now 25 percent diverse. **And that's really appealing to some people**, because when you come into a church like that—people from different nationalities and ethnicities united in praise to Jesus—it gives you a little taste of heaven. But it's also infuriating to some people—and I get letters from them saying, "Why are we celebrating this? This feels so woke and DEI and quotas." To which I always say, "Our goal has nothing to do with DEI or quotas or virtue signaling. God has called this church to reach all peoples in this community, and the Triangle is only 56 percent white. And that means if we're only reaching 56 percent of our community, we're only doing half the job, right? **"Our goal, we say, is to reflect the diversity of our community (that's a mission thing) and proclaim the diversity of the Kingdom (that's a gospel thing)"** It's not about DEI or quotas; it's about Jesus and the Great Commission. Again, that's appealing to some and infuriating to some, but it's who we are.
- I could go on and on. We're distinct.

Paul says, "That's what God has called you to, and living that way is hard—it's hard to swim opposite the culture on all these things—and if you're serious about it, you're going to have to ask: **"What influences am I surrounding myself with?"**

So go back to vs. 14: Therefore, Paul says, **Do not be unequally yoked (literally "other yoked"<sup>8</sup>) with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?**

Real quick: This is an allusion from the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 22:10, God's law forbids the yoking of ox and donkey together.<sup>9</sup> (**PIC of Double Yoke**) Think like a plow with two openings for an animal. You weren't allowed to put an ox in one and a donkey in the other.

Now, that was really practical instruction, because an ox and donkey pull in such different ways that it would really frustrate both animals. But still, that seems like a pretty odd thing for God to include in his Holy Law, right? "Worship no other gods but me." And, "Thou shall not **murder!**" Also, "Don't have an ox and donkey plow together."

Why would God care about that? Great question: A lot in the Old Testament law was intended to be symbolic; living illustrations that taught spiritual principles. The lesson here is that you shouldn't mix things pulling in opposite directions. God was less concerned about inefficiencies in farming and more concerned with his people corrupting themselves with bad influences.

That's what Paul picks up on. If you're yoked up with an unbeliever, you're going to pull in two different directions!

<sup>8</sup> 'heterozygous' HEH-te-roh-dzoo-GOON-tace

<sup>9</sup> Lev 19:19 it refers to mating different species of cattle: "You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind"

Listen: **Who you put in your immediate community has the most formative effect on you of anything else in your life, PERIOD.** Whenever I speak at a student camp, I always tell the students that if they're serious about following Jesus, it has to affect their friend group. And if they make a decision to follow Jesus and don't make adjustments to their friend group, they won't make it. I've literally never seen it happen.

**Proverbs 13:20** says, "He who walks with wise men will become wise, but a companion of fools will be destroyed." Or here's the way we always say it at Summit: **Your friends are the future you.**

- "You will become the average of your five closest friends."
- Or, "Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future."
- **Your friends are the future you.** Literally. I saw this stat the other day: Some of you resolved to lose weight this year. Get this: If your spouse gains weight, there's a 37 percent chance you will gain weight too. If your sibling gains weight, you have a 40 percent chance of gaining weight. But if your closest **friend** gains weight, that number jumps to 60 percent! That's the single biggest factor in whether or not you accomplish your goal. *So if your "bestie" is always suggesting "donut run," it might be time to have a talk.*

**Your friends are the future you. You show me your friends, I'll show YOU your future.** College students, it's why we encourage you to make Summit College, or some campus ministry, a core part of your college experience. Because you become the average of your five closest friends. If you were **stoned** last night, chances are three or four of your friends were too. And if you are **chasing after God** with all of your heart, chances are three or four of your friends are doing that too.

You say, "Pastor, are you telling me I need to get rid of any non-Christian friends?" No. In fact, Paul says, that's not what I mean.

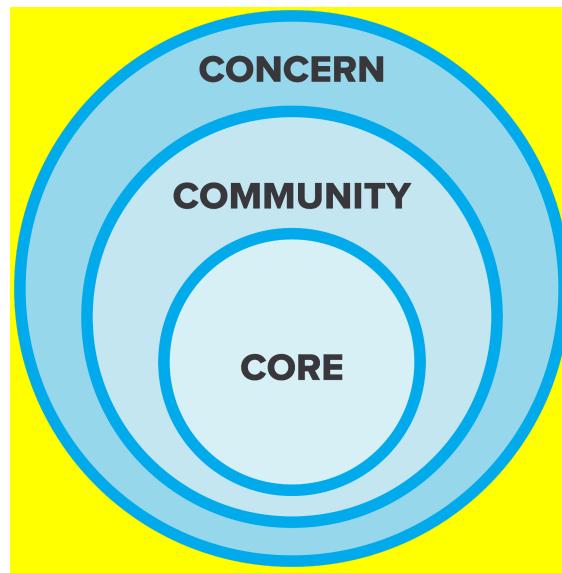
- In 1 Corinthians 5:10 he says, "I'm not telling you to stop hanging out with the sexually immoral of this world," because God intends for you to be a witness to them, and the only way you can do that is by being involved in their lives. In chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians,<sup>10</sup> Paul tells them they should frequent the homes of unbelievers and shop in their stores! So clearly, he's not telling them to withdraw completely.
- Rather, what he's saying is that when it comes to close friends—those you "partner" with, "yoke up" with—those need to be believers going the same direction and speed as you.

Over the years I've used **this little graphic** I find helpful ...

[\(3 CIRCLES GRAPHIC\)](#)

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor 10:27



Some of you need to move certain friends out of the “core” circle to the circle of “concern” (P.S. You don’t send them an official notification … “Hey, just FYI, you’ve been moved to the concern circle.” No, this is just for you.)

**Again, I have yet to see someone get serious with Jesus and make it when their choice to follow Jesus didn’t affect the makeup of their friend group.**

One of the most important places to apply it: who you date and marry (Because marriage is the ultimate yoke, the ultimate partnership, right?). You are going to share everything together—your hearts; your lives; eventually, you’ll run a home and a budget and raise kids together. I’m telling you, it becomes exponentially harder to live out the Christian life when you’re yoked up with someone who doesn’t share your core commitments and pulls the other direction. I can’t tell you how many sincere Christian people I’ve seen go wrong just from dating the wrong person. When some Christian is dating a non-Christian, I’m always like, “Have you thought about all the parts of your life this person is going to affect? Your kids. One day you’re going to love those kids more than you love anything in the world, and you’re going to bring into their lives as a primary influence someone who doesn’t love and follow Jesus?” Most Christians doing this think, “Well, eventually they’ll come around.” To which I say, “You don’t know that. And you’re willing to take a chance on your kids’ future like that? And is that even fair to them—dating them hoping you can change them? ‘I’m not satisfied with you the way you are—I need to change you?’”

And by the way: Maybe you’re listening to me right now and you’re the one who’s not a Christian, and you’re like, “Why are you picking on me?” I’d say, practically, for your sake, you shouldn’t date a Christian unless you plan to become one. Because here’s the thing: They’re never going to be happy until they convert you. They want to see you become a Christian and get baptized.

**Want me to prove that?** THEY INVITED YOU HERE TODAY. And the whole time I've been up here, they've been sneaking little peeks at you to see if you're paying attention. And I'll tell you something else: Their mom and dad don't really like you yet either. Their whole family is praying for you this weekend, that you'll become a Christian, and none of them are going to be happy until you do. So I'd just say to you: Probably best not to date a Christian unless you plan to become one.

***Being unequally yoked is not fun for either of the oxen.***

OK, one other place I want to apply this as we start the new year. If you're serious about following Jesus, you've got to ask what media influences you are allowing to shape you. ***The average person will watch somewhere between 300 and 500 hours of Netflix this year. The average American spends two hours a day on entertainment social media—like TikTok and Instagram. How does that compare to your Bible intake?***

Just like it is physically, you will become spiritually "what you eat." **Some of you are so concerned with what you eat physically ...** you're counting calories and measuring macros. How about your spiritual intake?

- Let me make a confession: I love Cheetos. I really do. I've never had a problem eating too much ice cream, but you leave an open bag of chips around and I will eat my weight in them. I think Cheetos taste amazing—they're addictive. And healthy!
- No, one day a friend RUINED it for me by pointing out the ingredients. Newsflash: There's not really even any cheese. There are "dairy-derived cheese ingredients." It's got micro amounts of nutrients, but it's not food. It might give you a little burst of energy, but you'll never thrive on it. In fact, the more you eat, the worse you feel. That's social media.

I'm not saying get rid of your phone or don't watch Netflix any more than I'm telling you to get rid of all Cheetos (though those could be GREAT things for you to fast from in these 21 DOPF). What I am asking is that you commit to making Bible intake a regular part of your life—at least try it for these 21 days. **Let me challenge you:**

- For a year, commit to coming to church on a regular basis, and when you have to miss because you're traveling or sick, listen to the message so you stay caught up.
- Commit to reading the Bible every morning in these 21 days. Just 15 minutes. Use the Summit app's "Daily Revival" to start.
- Change your radio station to one of the Christian stations—93.9 for music or 105.7 for mostly good Bible teaching. And mix in some great podcasts.
- **Read a couple of good books this year.** On my blog, [jdgreear.com](http://jdgreear.com), I just listed out my favorites from last year, so you can start there.

OK, one more question Paul presents to us—and I'll make it quick.

**3. Are your relationships genuine? (6:11–13; 7:2–4)**

**6:11** We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open ... 13 In return widen your hearts also.

7:2 Make room in your hearts for us ... 4 [as] I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.

This is a pretty remarkable statement coming from Paul, because Paul's relationship with the Corinthians had not been easy. They'd lied about him, questioned his motives, spread gossip about him, and just been downright prickly toward him. He had every reason to *cancel* them—which is probably what most of us would have done. If Paul had operated by the rules of modern psychotherapy, he'd have said: "*Look, this is just a negative relationship in my life, and I don't have any space for negative, draining relationships, so I'm cutting ties and walking away.*" Remarkably, however, Paul didn't do that, because that's not authentic Christianity. The body of Christ is a place where you don't walk away when things get difficult.

I'm not saying there's never a time to step back from somebody. I get that. But I'm saying that for most of us, church is more like a religious show you come to once a week than it is a family you belong to. Some of you sit at home and literally watch from your couch. Listen, watching a show or even going to a show is not the same as being a part of a family. **A family is where you know and are known**, and that involves rubbing up against people in ways that are not always pleasant.

**Here's a lesson I've learned after 25 long years of pastoring: This is profound. Are you ready?** Most people are awesome until you get to know them. Amen?

Listen, if your only experience with people in the church is seeing them in here on the weekend, all dressed up, smelling like perfume, smiles on their faces, you probably think everybody's awesome. But then you start to get to know them, and then you realize everybody has a prickly side. In fact, you might get your first taste of that in the parking lot on the way out—Amirite?

Listen, I love being involved in our church—it brings so many benefits to my life. But sometimes it's hard, because people are hard. But if you're serious about walking with Jesus, you'll do it.

The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (**PIC**) talked about "**the porcupine's dilemma**." (**PIC**: *(By the way, I think this guy came up with this insight because he looked like a porcupine; he looks kind of prickly himself.)* **The porcupine**: He's cute, isn't he? But you should probably **be careful if you want to snuggle with him**. The North American porcupine has around 30,000 individual quills, each with microscopic backward-facing barbs on the tip. So here's "the porcupine's dilemma." Imagine it's a cold night and a group of porcupines want to huddle together for warmth. They need warmth and tenderness like other animals, but the closer they get to each other, the more they prick each other with their quills.

We're the same way. I need people close to me—they are cute from a distance, but when I bring them close to me, their barbs prick me and mine prick them. But it's worth it. That's what Paul is demonstrating here: I've opened my heart to you; open yours to us.

Listen, if you're serious about this thing, you've got to get involved. We have to, as Paul says in 7:4, "**die together**" and "**live together**." And you can only do that if you get involved.

You say, "How do I do that?" **Come to the next Explore the Summit** (your campus pastor will tell you when the next one is). Or join a volunteer team or small group. If you were one of the ones who committed to come to Summit for a year, this is your next step. **It will be worth it, I promise.**

## VAMP // Conclusion

**Are. You. Serious?** Paul's given you three questions to ask to help determine whether, spiritually, you are cubic zirconium or a real, natural diamond.

### **Three things that show you're serious:**

- **#1: Your repentance is genuine.** You are truly sorry for what your sin did to God and to others. You're done blameshifting or trying to self-justify; you're genuinely sorry for what your sin did to God and others and ready to change.
- **#2: You seriously consider what direction your relationships and influences are taking you in** and surround yourselves with the right ones.
- **#3 You pursue real relationships** in the church because that's where real change happens.

**BOW YOUR HEADS ...** What's the Holy Spirit saying to you? Take a moment, reflect, and let him speak to you.