



BIBLICAL FOOTPRINT 10 — ASSOCIATIONS

The Bible makes clear that we are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, particularly in business and in marriage. 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1. But, we have a mission to the world by our lives and conduct to reach them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20; so we claim the promise of Jesus in John 17:11, 14-21 to be the ambassadors of His truth that He wants us to be. 2Corinthians 5:20.

To understand the principle espoused herein, we must comprehend the principle of yoking and what that means. When you hear the word yoke, the first thing that comes to mind is a pair of oxen being teamed together through the use of a wooden device that holds them together that is called a yoke. By virtue of the yoke, the oxen work together as a team. When one goes forward, the other goes with him. When one makes a turn to the right or left, so does the other. They, in essence, being two beasts, become one while under the yoke. But it is not voluntary that they become like that. It is forced labor, enslavement to the master of the yoke, if you will. They are not free of the yoke until such time as the master chooses to take it off. It is like a binding contract that you enter into it, and once done, you cannot free yourself from it until such time as the contract is completed, or some type of legal action on the part of either party is taken to prematurely end said contract, which is not done without incurring substantial costs and losses.

In today's world, marriage is obviously the first thing that comes to mind. The marriage is a binding contract, both spiritually and legally speaking, for life. At no time should any Seventh-

day Adventist enter into marriage with a non-Adventist, regardless of their profession of faith. It is doomed from the beginning because there is inequality in how one views God, the Law of God, the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the immortality of the soul, the sanctuary, and everything in between. There will be confusion, argument, debate, strife, friction, which will foster attitudes of resentment and bitterness until one partner calls it quits. Then divorce comes without a Biblical cause, the primary reason being the inequality of the yoking. As a result, the couple then goes before the courts of men to resolve a problem that never should have happened, and everybody gets hurt, including the church as a whole. Doing what the world does is not how we are set apart by God's standards. Could God have saved the marriage if the unbelieving partner had become converted? Yes, but how often does that happen? The normal course of events is massive compromise of principles in order to make it work and then both are lost. After the divorce, repentance on the part of either party is still available but the consequences must follow.

So also in business. At no time should an Adventist become a partner in a business project with an unbeliever or outside of the SDA faith for the same reasons. There will be a significant difference as to the view of how the business should be run: days and hours it will be open, what is the purpose of the venture and to what extent will that purpose be sought after (particularly in terms of profit and stuffing the back pocket), standards of service, am I doing this to glorify God or myself, etc. Inevitably, such partnerships do not work and cause much grief and loss in the long term. God is not glorified by such actions. Paul makes abundantly clear in the foregoing Scripture passage that God and the world cannot be yoked together at any time because their essence, their characters, their very reason for existence, are at opposite extremes of the pole and mutually repel each other.

The same holds true for memberships in clubs, organizations, secret societies, etc. We hold a membership in the only thing that is important, and that is in God's remnant church. We don't belong in any other organization that is not in the full-time business of serving God and reaching out to the world with the present truth of God's Word and the Three Angels' Messages we are to proclaim in these last days. **Even close friendships must be carefully entered into. Being an acquaintance, amicable, friendly is one thing that all of us should be. But the intimacy of friendship is something reserved for people of like faith, mind and purpose.**

A good example of this is found in the Old Testament between David and Jonathan. **1Samuel 18:1, 3** says, “The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul ... then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.” This intimate friendship continued until Jonathan’s death in battle on Mt. Gilboa. Part of David’s eulogy when lamenting the loss of his friend, he said, “I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me, thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.” **2Samuel 1:26**. This type of intimacy is a rare thing and is symbolic of how much God loves us and how we should love Him and why nothing that is unholy, unrighteous, or ungodly should have any part of us or our lives.

Having said that, this does not mean that we are to shut ourselves behind closed doors. No, we live in this world for the time being. The trick is not to become a part of it. That requires daily separation from the world and surrender to God. In John 17:15, Jesus told His Heavenly Father that He did not ask the Father to take them from or out of the world, but rather, that the Father would protect them or keep them from the evil, and **in vs. 18** Jesus said He was sending them out into the world.

We have a mission to this world to preach the Gospel to everyone by our lives, and by our words. We cannot do that behind locked doors. Rather, as we go through life in the world, we allow God to give us opportunities to be missionaries: to help someone in need; to speak an appropriate word of encouragement; to stand for truth in love if the need arises; to be the ambassador to the world showing what God has done for us that makes us different; unique individuals joined together in the fellowship of love, being a witness of truth in the world.

“The marriage ordinance dates back to God as its author, and to Paradise as its origin. And from the testimony of the Scriptures, it is ever to be regarded as a very sacred thing — the foundation of society, the safeguard to virtue, and the center of all those endearing relations which make life interesting.

“But notwithstanding that such is manifestly the design of heaven, far different results are reached, so that many a house, instead of being the abode of peace where religion sits enthroned, and God is honored, is but a place of envy and strife, where Satan is glorified. It is undoubtedly for the purpose of honoring God and preventing such unholy and unhappy consequences, that the apostle Paul writes so plainly and so pointedly to his

Corinthian brethren, **2Corinthians 6:14-16**, forbidding or warning them against being unequally yoked with unbelievers.

“Unequally yoked! Either the apostle meant that when the believer married the unbeliever they must be equally yoked, or else he meant to be understood as teaching that there could be no equality in yoking the believer with the unbeliever. That the latter view is the correct one, is evident from the number of strong arguments used touching this very thing.

“Unequally yoked! The object of yoking is that those yoked may draw together. To be equally yoked is to be yoked on an evener, so that neither the one nor the other has the advantage in drawing. To be unequally yoked is to give to one all the advantage in drawing, so that the other works all the while at a disadvantage.

“That the above figure is a very correct and forcible one, may be gathered from all the facts in the case. Whenever an agreement or partnership is formed between parties, especially those of opposite views and feelings, it is done either by the one party going the whole distance over to the other, or by a mutual compromise of those individualities that hinder a union. And when the believer marries the unbeliever, and the twain are made one flesh, according to the design and intent of the marriage ordinance, either the infidel must give up his infidelity and become a child of faith, else the believer must renounce his faith and become an infidel, or else each one must sacrifice a certain amount of personalities.

“If the unbeliever be required to renounce his unbelief and become a child of faith and God, where is the instance in a hundred, yea in a thousand, where he is willing or expects to do any such thing? And if the believer is asked to give up all, or even a part, of his faith, how unequal the demand! for, while the infidel has no certain convictions or fixed principles to lose, the believer has his clearest convictions of right, duty, and truth, yea, his highest aspirations of heart for purity and eternal life.

“Or if it be understood that each one is to retain his and her own peculiar notions and sentiments, where would be the sympathy or concord? And not only as a matter of consequence would there be discord enough to corrode what little happiness there is, or might otherwise be enjoyed, but there is a great disadvantage in the pulling; for while the unbeliever has naught to do but follow the inclinations of his own carnal heart, not so much as professing to love mercy, deal justly, or walk humbly, or to exercise the charity of the Bible, the believer, by his most sacred faith, feels obligated to do all these things. While the unbeliever is left to do just as he feels or pleases, the believer is bound in the most solemn and impressive manner to

do only that which is just and merciful. It does not require one to look the second time to see how unequal the drawing under such circumstances. Whoever heard of a partnership being formed where one party was amenable, and was held and firmly bound to do just right, and the other party was left to act as he pleased, with impunity? And yet this is practically or in reality the case when the believer marries the infidel.

“It may naturally be supposed that it can be no very difficult matter for a Christian to form a partnership, with an infidel, and be on good terms so far as being watched, found fault with, or called to an account for any little misconduct, is concerned; but such is not the case. The more dishonest the man with whom we deal, the more afraid is he of being cheated. The more unbelieving and selfish, the more envious and exacting, and the less forbearing and forgiving toward others. Not but what the unbeliever may be interested in getting a living, may be as industrious and saving as the believer; yes he may be over careful in many things; and this even in many instances may prove a snare to the believer; for while he loves the cause of God, and fain would see it prosper, the unbeliever is looking upon every moment and penny used in the service of God, as something thrown away, and may say as one aforesaid, ‘Why this waste of precious ointment?’ Why was it not sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?’

“Again, where is the sympathy or pulling together in these times of sore trial, when the faith of the stoutest Christian is tried to the utmost? Can the unbeliever encourage the believer to hope on and to struggle on, until the darkness is lifted and the light comes? Or how much comfort and consolation can the believer give to the unbeliever in those times, when the cares of this life and the sorrow of this world, which worketh death, threaten to drive the soul to distraction? The only comfort is the gospel, the only thing that will buoy the mind above cares and perplexities of this life, is the grace of God; but as this is only obtained by repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and as the unbeliever rejects these, the only thing that can be done is to let him struggle on in his own darkness, neither asking what he has not to give, nor offering what he will not receive.

“Unequally yoked! How many a high-minded and noble-hearted woman has endured a life-long agony, and died of a broken heart, having been unequally yoked with some incarnation of self and carnality. To carry out the figure, she pulled and pulled and pulled until heart and life failed, and she could pull no longer. And although the instances may be fewer, yet many a man of the purest metal, the clearest kind of grit, has been driven

from home, yea, to recklessness and desperation, by the continual clamor of a contentious and unreasonable woman. And if we should soften and smooth down those rough places, and put the most favorable construction on the matter that we can, all the advantages in drawing are against the one who wishes to live religion. And we may repeat the language of the apostle by asking, *What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*

“Happy is that man or woman who, wishing to serve God and live religion, shall find out and heed these truths in time to flee the danger.” Anonymous, James White, Editor, Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, January 13, 1863, pg. 53, 54

“Unwise marriages are the curse of this age. Such an alliance can but be disastrous to both parties. That love which has no better foundation than mere sensual gratification will be headstrong, blind, and uncontrollable. Honor, truth, and every noble, elevated power of the mind, is brought under the slavery of passions. The man who is bound in the chains of this infatuation is too often deaf to the voice of reason and conscience; neither argument nor entreaty can lead him to see the folly of his course.

“Men and women professing godliness should tremble at the thought of entering into a marriage covenant with those who do not respect and obey the commandments of God. It was this that opened the flood-gates of sin to the antediluvians. Such a connection with the world is a direct departure from God’s express requirements,—‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.’

“In these alliances the creature receives the love which should be given to the Creator. There is danger in entering into any intimate relation with those who have no connection with Heaven. This is the friendship which Inspiration calls enmity with God. We can not be too jealous of ourselves, lest, by associating with worldlings, we fall into the same habits. It was for this reason that the Israelites were commanded to dwell alone, as a people separate from all other nations. The friendship of the Lord’s enemies is more to be dreaded than their enmity; for Satan is constantly working through pleasing, intelligent unbelievers, to tempt the people of God to sin.” Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, December 30, 1880 & July 1, 1903

“This thought of a ‘calling out’ is found in another statement (2Corinthians 6:14): ‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the

living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'

"Here is this calling out or separation. Hence I like the first definition better than the latter. You will notice that in the text we read **in Acts**, there was a 'separation,' a 'calling out' from the Gentiles. In this place it is a coming out from unbelievers.

"This does not mean, as I understand it, that God's people are to go off by themselves, and colonize in some place; but it means that while they are mingling among, and living with, the people of the world, — living as a light to the world, — they should be a separate and distinct people from the world. Wherever God in His providence places His people, there they are to maintain that separation, that distinctness from the world that will characterize them as the children of God." George A. Irwin, February 19, 1899 General Conference Daily Bulletin, pg. 31

"Solomon thought himself strong enough and wise enough to maintain the purity of his religion and yet deviate from the commands of God. He thought he could convert his wives to the true religion, and that by thus binding himself with idolatrous nations, he could win them all to the service of the true God. But we can not incorporate light with darkness. Christ has no fellowship with Belial. By a union with idolaters, the king's own faith was perverted. The power and purity of true religion lost their influence over him. His conscience became marred and blunted; his finite judgment, in which he placed so much confidence, led him far astray, and wild license was regarded by him as independence and toleration. He lost his connection with God, and no longer realized that God was his wisdom and his strength.

Solomon thought to gain more power by thus allying himself with the heathen nations around him; and he was enriched with the gold and silver which was transported from Ophir and Tarshish, but it was at the cost of sacrificing noble principles and betraying sacred trusts.

One false step leads to another. Solomon's alliance with heathen nations was followed by evils which led the children of Israel to violate the law of God. The people became contaminated with the principles and

practices of the heathen. Polygamy was introduced into Palestine. The pure religious service instituted by God was replaced by idolatry of the darkest hue. Human sacrifices were offered; and the licentious rites practiced by the inhabitants of the Noatic world, were countenanced.

“And ‘it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God.’ From being one of the greatest kings that ever wielded a scepter, whose exalted wisdom made him renowned throughout the world, Solomon became profligate and intemperate, the tool and slave of others. His character, once noble and manly, became enervated and effeminate. His faith in the living God was shaken and supplanted by atheistic doubts. Unbelief marred his happiness, weakened his principles, and degraded his life; gloomy and soul-harassing thoughts troubled him night and day. The justice and magnanimity of his early reign were changed into despotism and tyranny; and his extravagance was sustained by grinding taxes, which were imposed upon the people. Poor, frail human nature! God can do but little for men, because they so soon lose their sense of dependence upon Him.

“The Lord would have all learn a lesson from the record of the life of Solomon. He desires His servants to preserve their holy and peculiar character. ‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers’ is His command; ‘for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?’

“While we are to be kind and courteous to all, we are not to connect with those who we know are acting in opposition to God. Solomon was estranged from God by the influence of his heathen wives; and God has forbidden His people to unite with unbelievers; for in so doing, they bring untold sorrow upon themselves, and reproach upon the cause of God. They may think, like Solomon, that their influence over those who are in the wrong will be beneficial; but too often they themselves, entrapped and overcome, yield their sacred faith, sacrifice principle, and separate themselves from God. By one false step they place themselves where they can not hope to break the chains that bind them.

“I would warn all, both young and old, Be careful what friendships you form and what companions you choose. Take heed lest what you now think to be pure gold turns out to be base metal. Worldly associations tend to throw obstructions in the way of your service to God; and many souls are ruined by unhappy unions, either business or matrimonial, with those who can never elevate or ennoble. Because of this, many men and women are

without hope and without God in the world. Their noble aspirations are dead; by a chain of circumstances they are held in Satan's net.

"Beware of following any voice but that of God. Those who call themselves sons and daughters of God, and yet walk contrary to His wise arrangements in order that they may follow the promptings of their own unsanctified hearts, which are ruled by passion and impulse, will have a bitter harvest to reap in this life, and their course may result in the loss of their souls.

"Keep your religion pure and untainted. Worldly interests may tempt you to yield your principles, but 'what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' Worldly greatness is no equivalent for integrity, honesty, a pure heart, and a noble, unwavering purpose to do right. Even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like him who possesses the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, untouched by the tinsel and show of the world.

"God would have us learn the solemn lesson that we are working out our own destiny. The characters we form in this life decide whether or not we are fitted to live through the eternal ages. No man can with safety attempt to serve both God and the world. God is fully able to keep us in the world, but not of the world. His love is not uncertain and fluctuating. Ever He watches over His children with a care that is measureless and everlasting. But He requires us to give Him our undivided allegiance. 'No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon.'

*"Solomon was endowed with wonderful wisdom, but the world drew him away from God. We need to guard our souls with all diligence, lest the cares and attractions of the world absorb the time that should be given to eternal things. God warned Solomon of his danger, and today He warns us not to imperil our souls by affinity with the world, saying, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'" **Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, November 26, 1896***

*"Paul says: 'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.' **Ephesians 5:11-13.** Again, 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.'*

2Corinthians 4:3. *But if secret societies have a gospel to preach, those outside of their lodges must be the lost, for their preaching is done in the secret lodge, and 'their works are in the dark.'*

"Isaiah speaks thus: 'Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?' **Chapter 29:15.** *While the truth of God is calculated to 'bring to light the hidden things of darkness,' and 'make manifest the counsels of the heart,' and to lead us to pursue a frank and open course, these secret societies exalt secretiveness as one of the highest of virtues. And indeed if all the members of any one secret society fail to observe secrecy they destroy that society at once. 'So great stress is laid upon this particular quality of virtue, that it is enforced among Masons under the strongest penalties and obligations.'* **Masonic Constitution p. 8, printed 1815.**

"Our second reason why Christians should not unite with secret societies is that thereby they would be brought into direct fellowship with the teachings of the world which again conflicts with the teachings of the Bible. As we have before said, these societies embrace in their fellowship different classes of the unconverted, and to unite with them brings us into the closest fellowship with the ungodly. The Bible enjoins separation from the world. Says David, 'I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked. I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord.'* Psalm 26:4-6. *Solomon says; 'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse; my son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path.'* Proverbs 1:10, 14, 15. *But Paul's testimony is very explicit: Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what, fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'* 2Corinthians 6:14, 15, 17, 18. *This last text is very explicit and demands separation from the ungodly. Some have tried to avoid the force of the text by saying that it refers to marriage. But the

text does not apply to marriage; for in that case it is said, 'If the unbelieving depart let him depart;' but in this case it is referring to the righteous separating themselves from the wicked.

“How can a Christian, who really desires a close walk with God, who has an understanding of the above scriptures, combine their sympathy and influence with a worldly society which has its festivals and levees, and where an appeal is constantly made to them to join in the partaking of wines, cigars, etc., after lodge hours. And as we have been informed by some who have been members of several of these societies, it comes to a pass finally that a man will be thought very stingy if he will not in his turn ‘Treat the company, or furnish them an oyster supper.’ It is no place for the children of God to go if they wish to follow the word of God.” John Byington, J. N. Loughborough, George W. Amadon, “Secret Societies,” August 9, 1864, Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Vol. 24, pg. 86, 87