

# SET APART, NOT AUTOMATICALLY SAVED

Learning Bible Exposition from 1 Corinthians 7:12-16

## Student Guide

**Focus Verse - 1 Corinthians 7:14**

For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

**Good Hope Baptist Church / Cross+Walk Ministry**

Prepared for faithful exposition, discipleship, and local church teaching

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# Publication Information

Learning Bible Exposition from 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 - Student Guide

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## Before We Begin

### Opening Question

Some verses trouble people because they seem to promise more than they actually deliver. First Corinthians 7:14 is one of those verses. Read quickly, and it can sound as though Paul is declaring that an unbelieving spouse or child is automatically saved simply because one person in the home believes. But a careful reading of the whole paragraph gives us something far better than false assurance: truthful hope.

### Study Aim

This study uses 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 as a training passage for Bible exposition. The goal is not only to understand what Paul means when he says the unbelieving spouse is "made holy" and the children are "holy." The goal is also to learn how to arrive at that meaning carefully.

### Exposition Method

1. What did God say?
2. What does it mean in this passage?
3. How does it fit with the rest of Scripture?
4. How should we respond?

## Part 1 - What Did God Say?

### Observe

1. Paul is speaking to believers who are already married to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. If the unbelieving spouse is willing to remain, the believer should not \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Paul still calls the spouse \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Paul says the unbelieving spouse may yet be \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Verse 14 begins with "for," so Paul is giving a \_\_\_\_\_ for what he has just said.

### Understand

Verse 14 does not stand by itself. It belongs to the paragraph in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. Paul is answering one issue: what should a believer do when he or she is already married to an unbelieving spouse?

The most important observations are that Paul still calls the spouse unbelieving and then says that spouse may yet be saved. Therefore, whatever "made holy" means in verse 14, it cannot mean automatic salvation.

### Key Conclusion

The unbelieving spouse still needs salvation through personal faith in Jesus Christ. The believer's presence matters, but the believer's faith does not replace the unbeliever's need to believe.

### Apply

1. Wrong conclusion to avoid: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Right conclusion in your own words:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2 - What Does It Mean in This Passage?

### Observe

1. Paul is addressing an existing marriage where one spouse has come to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A Christian in Corinth may have wondered whether the marriage was spiritually \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A word's possible meanings are called its semantic \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Context decides which meaning is active in a particular \_\_\_\_\_.

### Understand

In first-century Corinth, religion was not limited to private belief. Public life, family life, meals, business relationships, household customs, and civic celebrations were often woven together with religious practice. That background helps explain why a Christian married to an unbeliever might wonder whether the marriage was defiled or whether the children were unclean.

#### DEEPER INSIGHT - Why This Question Would Matter in Corinth

Corinth was a Roman colony, a major commercial center, and a place where public life revolved around temples, civic ceremonies, household customs, and social expectations. Religion was not separated into a private category, the way many people think of it today.

A meal with family, a business gathering, a public celebration, or a civic event could involve honor given to a pagan god, participation in a temple setting, or food connected to sacrifice. This helps explain why Paul later addresses food offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8-10. Believers were trying to follow Christ in a world where worship, meals, money, family loyalty, and public life often overlapped.

That background helps us understand why a Christian married to an unbeliever might feel real concern. If my spouse still participates in old religious customs, does that make the marriage unclean? If pagan worship still touches parts of family life, are the children defiled? If my home is spiritually divided, am I compromised by staying?

Paul is not saying the spouse's unbelief has ruined the marriage. He is not saying the believer is defiled by staying. He is not saying the children are unclean. He is also not saying everyone in the home is automatically saved because one person believes.

#### Meaning in Context

In this passage, "made holy" means that the unbelieving spouse is relationally set apart by marriage to the believer. The household has been affected by the presence of the believer, but holy influence does not equal personal salvation.

## Apply

1. Define holy influence in one sentence:

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2. Why does holy influence not equal salvation?

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## Part 3 - How Does This Fit with the Rest of Scripture?

### Observe

1. In Exodus 40, the tabernacle, altar, and utensils were called \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Those objects were set apart for God's service, but they were not personally \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The point is not that children are objects. The point is that "holy" can mean set apart in relation to God's \_\_\_\_\_ and purpose.
4. The children are not automatically saved, but they are not called \_\_\_\_\_.

### Understand

In Scripture, something can be called holy because it is set apart for God's presence, worship, and service. A bowl, plate, altar, or utensil was not saved from sin. It was holy because it belonged to the sphere of God's presence and worship.

This helps us understand Paul's language. When Paul says the children are holy, we should not immediately assume he means they are automatically saved. He is saying they are not unclean. They are set apart in a real household sense because one parent belongs to Christ.

When one parent belongs to Christ, that household is different. One person in the home carries the truth of Christ, prays in the name of Christ, teaches the Word of Christ, repents before Christ, loves because of Christ, and bears witness to the life and light of Christ.

### Apply

1. One way my home can show the presence of the gospel:  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why does this passage give hope without giving false assurance?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Part 4 - How Should We Respond?

### Observe

1. Do not give false \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Do not \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Romans 2:4 says God's kindness is meant to lead people to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. If the unbelieving spouse refuses to remain and leaves, Paul says the believer is not \_\_\_\_\_ and God has called us to peace.

### Understand

Do not say, "My spouse is saved because I am a Christian." Do not say, "My children are automatically right with God because I believe." Paul does not say that. The unbelieving spouse still needs Christ. The children still need Christ. Salvation is personal through faith in Christ.

But do not despair either. Paul does not say, "Your faith does not matter unless everyone in the house believes." Your life with Christ in that home matters. Pray, love, repent, forgive, speak the truth, and trust God with what only God can do.

### Apply

1. How can a Christian speak clearly about salvation without becoming harsh or manipulative?
2. What is the difference between faithful witness and trying to force conversion?

### Peace and Safety

If the unbelieving spouse chooses to leave, Paul says the believer is "not enslaved" and that God has called us to peace. That means the believer is not required to force the marriage to continue when the unbelieving spouse refuses to remain. This does not make the situation painless, and it does not mean the believer failed. Even in grief, the gospel witness already given is not wasted.

### Personal Reflection

1. Where do I need to avoid false assurance?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Where do I need to avoid despair?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. One faithful step I can take this week:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Final Review and Takeaway

### Final Exposition Method Review

1. What did God say?
2. What does it mean in this passage?
3. How does it fit with the rest of Scripture?
4. How should we respond?

### Teaching Summary

1 Corinthians 7:14 does not teach automatic salvation for an unbelieving spouse or for children. It teaches that the believer's presence in the home matters. The unbelieving spouse is set apart in relation to the believing spouse. The children are not unclean, but holy in a household sense. The household is not spiritually ruined, but every person in the household still needs personal faith in Jesus Christ.

### FINAL TAKEAWAY

A spiritually divided home is rarely easy, but it is not hopeless for the believer. Your presence does not save, but it is not meaningless. They still need Christ, and you are called to live as one who belongs to Him - steadily, humbly, and expectantly.