

Living For What Matters Most

1 Corinthians 7:8-39

Pastor Guy Gray

So Many Issues!

Sex, marriage, divorce, separation, singleness, widowhood; even circumcision and slavery—you'll find it all in 1 Corinthians 7. So many issues in one chapter and all of it so intense! It's all sort of messy and confusing too. In one line Paul says, "I give this command - not I but the Lord!" (verse 10). Two verses later he says, "to the rest I say this - I, not the Lord." (verse 12). On a related topic in verse 25 he says, "I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy." What's going on here? You can almost feel Paul struggling to say things just right. He wants to deal with the real life questions and issues of the Christian community—but its tough going! These are issues that people care deeply about, important issues that have a huge impact on their whole life experience. One of the things we learn in this "difficult" chapter is that the answers for these life issues aren't always going to be quick and easy. In reality, the Christians of Corinth were learning a whole new way of thinking, choosing and behaving as followers of Christ. That's not necessarily a quick or easy process—for them, or for us! How crucial it is for us to take the time and effort to think deeply and pray earnestly to gain a Christ centered perspective on every dimension of our lives.

A Different Way of Thinking

There is one overriding principle that holds true through all the various issues raised in this chapter—followers of Christ are concerned first and foremost with living for Christ. This is what matters most. It is Christ who has purchased them on the Cross and now they belong to Him! It is Christ who is going to return and take us unto Himself. This is how followers of Christ begin to think and this type of thinking ought to have a major impact on their attitudes and choices in life. It doesn't matter if a Christian is single or married or struggling with a tough marriage (or even if they are a slave or free according to this chapter.) Each follower of Christ, in whatever life situation they find themselves, needs to start thinking from the same basic starting place—Christ is Lord and they live above all to please and serve Him. (See 7:17-30.) The Christian is taught to live with a sense of urgency. Not an urgency to get married or to get out of a bad marriage or to find personal satisfaction—but an urgency to please Christ and serve Him, even if this is difficult. Once this truly becomes the starting place for your thinking, it puts a totally different perspective on the issues you are struggling with in your life.

Building a Counter Culture of Christ Followers

What Paul is actually doing in this chapter and the next is community building. He is building a community of Christ for the world. To build a community of Christ in a fallen culture is to actually create a counter culture of Christ followers. This is a community of people who live for a higher purpose than their own fulfillment. This is a group of people who just think differently about the basic issues of life, including sex, marriage and singleness. All of those things, in the lives of Christ followers are being brought under the Lordship of Christ. That process is not always quick or simple. It means wrestling with personal choices and sometimes being willing to experience hurt or disappointment in our lives. It means being absolutely committed to valuing marriage as God values it. It means using singleness as a special tool with which to serve Christ. It means learning to find fulfillment in your relationship with Christ more than any other relationship in your life. This is radical! This is counter cultural! This is the way of Christ in a fallen world!

Questions for further Exploration and Discussion:

Spend some time reading through 1 Corinthians 7:8-39 this week.

How does this passage impact you? How is the Lord working in your life and heart through His Word?

Slave of Christ?

In verses 22 & 23 Paul writes, "...he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price..."

What is the meaning of this statement in the context of the passage? What kind of an attitude is Paul promoting among the Corinthians?

How does this teaching apply to your life and circumstances today? Is there a situation in your life in which following Christ would be "counter-cultural"? Pray about these things.

Coming up:

TODAY: 1/6 SIGN-UPS

Are you plugged in?

Check out the lobby this month and get information on how you can get plugged into the community at River West Church. We will have sign-ups and information for Community Groups, Bible Studies & getting involved with our outreach ministries.

Women's Bible Studies

Women's Ministry is offering a variety of studies starting in January. After each service visit the tables set up in the fellowship hall to find out more about these upcoming studies.

Financial Peace University

Sign-up today in the Fellowship Hall for Financial Peace. This 13 week class starts February 4th.

Outreach Ministries Drive...

Our Outreach Ministries (HOTEL, Dinner and A Movie & Community House) need your help to keep the people that they serve warm & cozy. Starting today bring your new or almost new, coats, socks, maternity clothes & sleeping bags, etc... as well as nutritious foods to church.

THURSDAYS STARTING 1/10

FOUNDATIONS: ANSWERING CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, 7:00pm, RWLG

Join us for our new series starting Jan. 10th (note the date change) as we explore & respond to the new wave of militant atheism.

SATURDAYS

FITBODY, 8:30-9:30am

FitBody is a body conditioning class that will refine your body, spirit & soul. Set to Christian music, this class is designed for all "bodies" & all fitness levels. There is no charge for this class. Childcare is not available. For more information contact Gina Kulper at 636.8294 or gina6855@hotmail.com