

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 12TH - 13TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

**LIVE AS YOU WERE CALLED (1 CORINTHIANS 7:17-24)**

Many within the church at Corinth were looking to become “**upwardly mobile**” by changing their **season and station in life**.

- Some were perhaps looking to **improve their social or spiritual standing** through getting married or divorced (vs. 8-16).
- Paul's counsel to them is to **center their lives on their unique calling** and focus on pleasing God, not on trying to **change their circumstances** (vs. 17).
- There's nothing wrong with trying to **improve our lives or better ourselves** - it's just that seeking happiness in new circumstances rarely works if we're not focused on **pleasing and obeying God with every decision** we make in life.
- God has called us first to **holiness**, not happiness - if we pursue our own self-centered version of “**happiness**,” we'll miss out on both.
- But if **holiness comes first**, we might get both.

**AN EXAMPLE FROM CIRCUMCISION (VS. 18-20)**

As a religious rite, circumcision was required of all male Jews as a sign of the covenant **God made with Abraham** (Genesis 17:9-14).

- Christians are made right with God through **faith in Christ**, not a religious work.
- Paul is saying to anyone in this church, “**if you were circumcised** when you became a Christian, great! **If you weren't, great!**”
- Ultimately, circumcision doesn't count for anything, **rather keeping the commandments of God and serving God** where we are right now is what truly matters (vs. 19).
- Gentiles shouldn't try to appear as Jews, and **Jews shouldn't try to appear as Gentiles** - just be who you are and serve God!
- Religious **uniformity isn't pleasing** to God.

**AN EXAMPLE FROM SLAVERY (VS. 21-24)**

Roman slavery was **much different than slavery** we're familiar with in the history of the U.S.

- About 1/3 of **the Roman population** were slaves and another 1/3 were freed slaves.
- Many would **sell themselves into slavery** to pay off debt or provide for their families, and slaves were often doctors, lawyers, politicians, and held prominent positions in **Roman households**.
- The broader principle is, “**should I automatically change my occupation** when I become a Christian?”
- Paul's response is, “No, you don't have to, if you **have an opportunity** to, go ahead, but you can serve God no matter where you work” (vs. 21).
- Your occupation doesn't define you - **who you are in Christ defines you** (vs. 22-23).
- In Christ, **every slave is a free-man**, and in Christ, every free-man is a bond-servant of Christ who has been, “bought with a price” (vs. 22-23).
- “Don't become bondservants of men” (vs. 23b) - we're never to put ourselves under the inappropriate control or influence of others and let the **world's value systems** define our worth.
- We can **seek God's best and be used by Him right where we are** (vs. 24).

**PASSING AWAY (1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-31)**

Concerning the “**betrothed**,” “**virgins**,” “**maidens**,” “**unmarried young people beyond the age of puberty**” (vs. 25), **Paul has no commandment from the Lord**, only a “**judgment**” made in view of the “**present distress**.”

- It's difficult to know for sure what Paul meant by the “**present distress**,” but **church historians point to famines in Greece** and increasing persecution of Christians as two possibilities.
- In view of the difficulties facing this Christian community, **it would be better for a person to be unmarried** (vs. 26). If someone was already married, **they needed to stay married** (vs. 27), and if someone went ahead and got married, they weren't sinning (vs. 28).
- Paul just knew that the trials that were to come **would be difficult for those who had the responsibility of marriage and family**.
- Being married, having children, and starting a family **comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility**.
- Before any couple rushes to get married, **they need to make sure they've considered all of the factors present** and they're being responsible.
- Are we **spiritually, relationally, financially ready?**
- Are our expectations reasonable? Do we know how to communicate? Do we **even know each other** and each others' family?
- Paul then warns these believers against **putting roots down too deep in a world that's passing away** (vs. 29-31). “The appointed time has grown very short” (vs. 29) - Jesus can return at any time and **must make sure that we're living for more** than just the things around us that are passing away.
- Entertainment, politics/government, the economy, our career, our hobbies - **all are passing away!**
- “**Let those who have wives...**” - **embrace the responsibilities of marriage and family**, but don't make your spouse or family your idol.
- “**Let those who mourn...**” - everything sad will someday become untrue. **Don't despair or become hopeless** over the current state of the world.
- “**Let those who rejoice...**” - enjoy your life, but find your **deepest joy in eternal things**.
- “**Let those who buy...**” - don't let what you own end up owning you. Don't let the **pursuit of consuming** keep you from living for the Lord.
- “**Those who deal with the world...**” - we must deal with the world, but we must be careful to not let ourselves grow worldly and **love the systems and mindsets of the world**.

- “**The present form of this world is passing away**” - don't **EVER** grow so comfortable that you use your responsibilities as an excuse to not live for the Lord.

**TO PROMOTE GOOD ORDER (1 CORINTHIANS 7:32-40)**

**THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE UNMARRIED TO SERVE (VS. 32-35)**

Paul's counsel to the young people in this church to **not get married was for their benefit** - not their harm (vs. 32, 35).

- Those who are married have “**anxieties**” that those who are not married simply don't have.
- Those who aren't married have **opportunities to serve God** that those who are married simply don't have. Singleness (even if it's only for a season) should be used to **serve the Lord and others**, not simply to serve our self.
- Singleness provides **opportunities for missions, volunteer work, strong beautiful friendships/ community**, and time to be able to give, “**undivided devotion to the Lord**”.
- We still are called to serve the Lord when we're married, **it just looks different**.

**WHAT ABOUT ARRANGED MARRIAGES? (VS. 36-38)**

Anyone who is not “**behaving properly**” towards his betrothed doesn't refer to **someone not living in purity with a boyfriend/girlfriend**, this counsel is given towards fathers of daughters who are of marriageable age.

- “**Behaving improperly**” has nothing to do with **improper moral behavior**, but with denying a daughter or son the right to marry.
- If a child of marriageable age wants to get married and has “**strong passions**,” they can get married and there's no sin there.
- But if they've firmly established it in their heart and have their desire under control, that **daughter or son can stay single, and the family** hasn't wronged them in any way.
- Every situation is **unique and requires wisdom, prayer, and wise counsel**.
- Why must Christians be so **cautious, careful, responsible, and wise** in making decisions regarding marriage?
- Because marriage is for life! (vs. 39a) There's no room biblically for a “**trial marriage**” (cohabitation), and there's no escape hatch once you get married.
- Marriage **MUST** be built on something sturdier than **romantic excitement, good looks, sexual desire, money, or social acceptance**.
- A woman whose husband has died is free to remarry, but **Paul thinks she'd be happier if she didn't** (vs. 39b-40).
- But she's only free to remarry someone who is, “in the Lord” - uniting a **believer to an unbeliever in marriage** is essentially making two spiritually opposite things, “one flesh”.
- This makes for an **incredibly difficult, painful, and confusing** marriage relationship.

**YOU ARE NOT DEFINED BY YOUR APPEARANCE, NATIONALITY, ETHNICITY, OR RACE - BUT BY CHRIST**

- God sees past the outward appearance of religion or social acceptability and knows your heart.
- What matters more to Him than you, “**looking the part**” is **you keeping His commandments** to love Him first and others as yourself.
- When the **opinion of the One who matters most matters the most to you**, you can experience freedom.

**YOU ARE NOT DEFINED BY YOUR CAREER, SOCIAL STANDING, OR INCOME - BUT BY CHRIST.**

- Most of the time, you can serve **God no matter where you work or what you do**.
- Ultimately, your **occupation doesn't define you** - your work is what you do, it's not who you are.
- There's **nothing wrong with taking opportunities God has given you to improve yourself**, but just know that true contentment comes from the inside, not the outside.

**YOU ARE NOT DEFINED BY THE SYSTEMS, MINDSETS, AND ECONOMIES OF THIS WORLD - BUT BY CHRIST.**

- Enjoyment of life is a gift from God, **but if we find our deepest joy** in entertainment, political ideologies, career, hobbies, toys, and the consumption of **MORE** we are wasting our lives.
- This world is passing away - **we can't use worldliness or busy-ness** as an excuse for obedience and sacrifice to the Lord.

**YOU ARE NOT DEFINED BY YOUR MARRIAGE, CHILDREN, FAMILY, OR DOMESTIC DUTIES - BUT BY CHRIST**

- Marriage, children, and family come with **tremendous responsibilities that we're to embrace** and accept.
- But when we use our “**busy-ness**” and our **idolatry of the family calendar** as an excuse to not serve the **Lord** and keep Him first, we're forgetting what's most important.

**YOU ARE NOT DEFINED BY YOUR SINGLENES - BUT BY CHRIST.**

- If you're a single Christian, you're neither a **2nd class human** or free to use your “**freedom**” to pursue a **self-centered life** (vs. 23).
- In your season (whether its for life or temporary), use it to serve, to **develop strong beautiful friendships/ community**, and use it to give, “**undivided devotion to the Lord**.”
- “Let each **person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him**, and to which God has called him.” (vs. 17)
- **In whatever season or station you're in** - serve the Lord, obey His commands, and **keep Him in the center of your life**.
- **Remember** - God can be glorified in **your season!**