

MAY 29, 2022
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
SINGLE STORY
1 CORINTHIANS 7:7-9, 25-40
SPRING QUARTER WEEK 5 OF 7

Getting to Know Each Other Better

1. What's a common piece of advice you don't agree with and why?

The old adage that "More is caught than taught." I may change my mind on this, so please give me grace on that, but at this point I haven't seen it be the case that you can live your life and expect much to be passed along unless you teach. I understand it's a both/and, but I am not sure that more is caught than taught, for if that were the case, passages like Deuteronomy 6 would be somewhat nonsensical. But I could be wrong.

How about you?

Renewed by Grace/Equipped as Disciples

Read 1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 25-40

2. What are the four D's Ryan identifies in the text?

Data - vv. 26-27.

²⁶ I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. ²⁷

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

Destiny - vv. 29-31.

²⁹ This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, ³⁰ and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, ³¹ and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

Devotion - vv. 32-35.

³² I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. ³³ But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, ³⁴ and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. ³⁵ I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. (1 Corinthians 7:32-35)

Desires - vv. 36-38.

³⁶ If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. ³⁷ But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. ³⁸ So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from

marriage will do even better. (1 Corinthians 7:36-38)

3. In light of them, consider some or all of the following questions for discussion and application-

Here are notes from Ryan's manuscript which might help with the discussion of this bullet point as well as the discussion of the remaining two.

Overall principle - God most often directs through the Spirit's leading, not through binding legislation.

Data -

- Our main point from last week is that your current circumstances are God's divine calling.
- Paul gives the same command - to remain as you are - that he gave last week. But then he adds this idea of considering what's going on around you.
- He challenges them to consider the "present distress" as they seek to make decisions.
- His point is that getting married is another person to worry about, having kids is another mouth to feed, and those concerns ought to be factored in when you're making a decision about whether or not to get married. Paul wants them to consider the data.
- Don't ignore your circumstances, but don't assume you're a slave to them either.
- Sometimes God does call us to do things that seem crazy in light of all that's going on.

Destiny -

- Here's the question: should we make decisions based on present distress or future bliss?
- Which one? And the answer is: both!
- This is the first tension we engage as we make decisions, both about marriage and about everything else in our lives, the tension of data and destiny.
- We truly do live with our feet in two different worlds - it's not either/or, it's both/and.
- As Christ followers our goal is to fully acknowledge the world as it is with all of its pain and brokenness, and to completely hope in the world that is sure because of the resurrection. It's unwise to resolve that tension.
- There are two things Paul is getting at with this statement. First, I believe he's reminding them that they are heading toward a time when marriage won't exist. (Matthew 22:30)
- Secondly, this world is passing away, but a renewed creation, in all of its glory, is about to emerge. (Revelation 21:5)
- The implication is that we will inevitably live in this world differently when we realize that the restoration of ALL things is near.

Devotion -

- We are called to have undivided devotion to the Lord.
- In this context the word "devotion" carries the meaning of "to constantly attend to."
- It's the picture of a waiter constantly filling up your coffee at a diner.

- But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3)
- Paul's point is that if you're married, you can't live like you aren't - your devotion is going to be divided.
- I think Paul's point is that when you're married and when you have kids, there are responsibilities that you have that you cannot neglect EVEN to serve God.
- Paul's point is that the person who is not married is freer to serve the Lord.
- The question we should ask ourselves about any decision is: what will allow me to live wholeheartedly devoted to Jesus? His point is that there is freedom in being unified in focus.

Desires -

- So Paul challenges the church in Corinth to have devotion to Jesus at the forefront of their minds, but he realizes there are other variables we have to take into consideration.
- It's as though he's saying, "God doesn't want you to be miserable and devoted."
- Once again, notice Paul living in the gray... "If you marry, you'll be fine... but if you don't it will be even better."
- Paul reiterates his preference for the single life, but he refuses to legislate it.
- What is the other deciding factor that he brings right alongside devotion to Jesus? He tells them to pay attention to:
 - Their wishes
 - The passions
 - Their heart
- He claims that when you're making decisions, about whether or not to get married, but also about other things, you should stay in tune with the desires that stir within.
- When we make decisions we have to engage the tension of devotion and desire.
- ⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)
- As we focus our delight on God, he will shape the desires of our hearts in a way that helps direct the course of our lives.
- Often the subtle message we receive in Christian circles is that you have to squelch your desire in favor of devotion, but Paul doesn't seem to agree. He's calling people to live in that tension, rather than resolve it. That means that God wants you to take your longings and desires into account as you make decisions and seek to follow him.
- What if he asks us what we want?
- That doesn't mean we can or should do whatever we want, but if our desires align with God's heart and the teaching of Jesus, it appears we are free to follow our desires, even if that makes us less effective for the kingdom. As Saint Augustine said, "Love God and do whatever you please: for the soul trained in love to God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved."

So now you are better equipped to have a conversation about the following three areas. Feel free to skip questions if they don't pertain to your group.

- **If you are thinking about getting married, or would like to be married either now or at some point in the future, how do they help you in making that decision?**
- **For those who are married - how do you live in the tension of destiny and devotion? (vv. 29-35)**
- **Are there any decisions coming up (which your group may or may not know about) where the application of these four D's will help you decide what to do? Or, is there a past decision where you might have used the four D's (even if you didn't realize it at the time)? Talk about these together.**

Sent in Love

4. What is one way you will apply the text this week?

It would be nice if the application were around the idea of "faith expressing itself through love." This is the "commandment of God" that we are called to obey.