

Week 37: 1 Corinthians 7-13

Study Guide for the week of September 12-18, 2011



Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with 1 Corinthians 7. As you read through all of Paul's letters, it is important to keep two things in mind:

- 1) Paul was writing letters to particular people who were dealing with particular issues in their lives. In the case of 1 Corinthians, Paul was writing a letter back to the Christians in Corinth. In part of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses issues they had raised in a previous letter they had sent to him. (see 7:1a)
- 2) Keep in mind that Paul believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent. (see 7:29a, 31b)

How do these two affect your interpretation of what Paul is teaching? If you wrote a letter to Paul asking him to address some issues in your faith journey, what would be those issues? From your knowledge of the Bible, what answers do you think Paul would give you? Do you think that we are living in the end times? How does your opinion on this affect the way you live your life? List all that you learn about marriage and being single from this chapter? Which teachings apply to you? Why does Paul believe that being married distracts from the spiritual life? How has being married or being single distracted or contributed to your spiritual life? What is the spiritual principle that is being taught in verses 17 and 24 and illustrated in verses 18-23? How would you apply this to your life now?

Discussion starters *If you are leading a small group, you may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: What do you remember about the first time you received Holy Communion? What is important to you in taking Holy Communion?
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. 1 Corinthians 7 As a small group, you could work through together the personal reflection/journaling exercise above.
4. 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 What do you learn about intellectual pride from these verses? Where do you struggle with intellectual pride? What really matters in the end according to verse 3? What does it mean to be "known by God?"
5. 1 Corinthians 8 If you have a study Bible or commentary, find out more about the issue Paul is addressing in this chapter – eating meat that had been offered to idols in pagan temples. Read also 1 Corinthians 10:14-33. What principles for your life do you learn from how Paul addresses this issue?
6. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 What does it mean when Paul writes that he tries to "find common ground" (NLT) or "become all things to all people" (NRSV)? Does that mean conforming to non-believers or does it mean something else? Is it possible to become so insulated in our Christian community that we are not effectively connecting with non-believers? Where do you see this happening in both the church and in your own life? Cite examples of finding common ground without losing the truth of the Gospel message (e.g. different worship styles, but the unchanging message of Jesus). How do you personally seek to find common ground with non-believers so as to lead them to faith in Christ?
7. 1 Corinthians 10:13 This one verse holds great promises for us when we face temptation. Too often we over-simplify temptation as something like wanting another cookie. Other times we give temptation too much power and think that it is irresistible. What are the teachings and promises in this verse? Discuss what they can mean in your life. Do you think temptation is a real force in your life? The sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer is, "Lead us not into temptation." Martin Luther wrote this explanation of the sixth petition, "*God tempts no one to sin, but we ask in this prayer that God would watch over us and keep us so that the*

devil, the world, and our sinful self may not deceive us and draw us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins. And we pray that even though we are so tempted we may still win the final victory.” What does Luther’s explanation teach you about temptation? Why do you think Luther names “false belief and despair” in particular? Reading over chapter 10, what do you suppose were the temptations that some of the Corinthians were facing? What is a temptation you are facing? Your group could pause after each person has shared their answer to this last question and pray verse 13 over him/her, substituting “you” where appropriate and naming the temptation to make it personal to the person for whom you are praying.

8. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 What does this passage teach about Holy Communion? What do you think verse 27 means?
9. 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 Who are the unsung heroes working behind the scenes in our church, in any church? How vital are their roles in the church? Are there superior and inferior roles to play in the church? How does Paul answer that question (v 26)? Paul’s assertion in verse 26 directly confronted the Greek and Roman “ideal” of dispassionate self-sufficiency. Do we wrestle with the same issue in our culture today? How do we apply Paul’s words to our lives today?

Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 1 Corinthians 10:13

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. Building off of 1 Corinthians 12, one possibility this week would be to pray over the gifts for ministry that each person has using this question:

What is one gift that you believe God has given you that you would like to use more for God’s purpose?

After everyone has shared go into a time of prayer having the person sitting to your right pray for you in regards to using your gift.

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a small group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.