LESSON SEVEN

Built Different

"A Disciple Is Faithful Where God Places Them"

SCRIPTURE | 1 Corinthians 7:1–24

MEMORY VERSE

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT

Built different: disciples honor God in all situations, specifically in marriage, singleness, and present circumstances.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM

Discipleship Distinctive: family, dating, and marriage

GROUP TIME

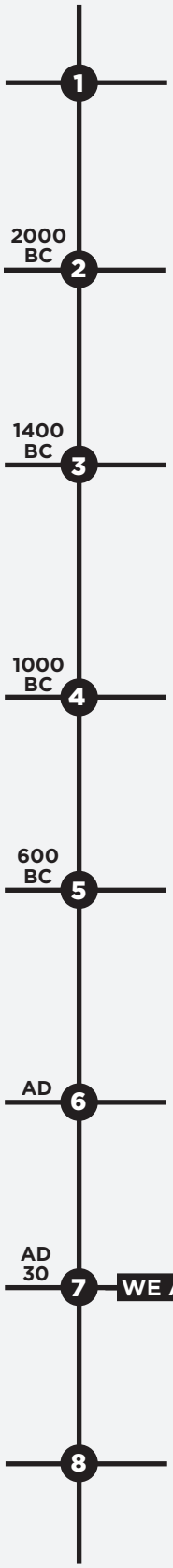
5 minutes	**Welcome**
5–10 minutes	**Attention Grabber**
10 minutes	**Story / Context**
25 minutes	**Discussion**
5–10 minutes	**Closing & Prayer**

PRAYER FOCUS

- **Next Steps Class –** Pray for NSC this weekend. Pray for people to connect with Lakepointe in an intentional way, committing to the church family to be discipled and finding a place to leverage their talents and skills.
- **Baptism Weekend –** Pray for Baptism Weekend next weekend. Pray for people to respond to the work of the Spirit and to boldly proclaim the new life they have in Christ!

<u>BEGIN</u> this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

GOD'S STORY TIMELINE



1. God Creates the World and Promises a Rescuer *(Genesis 1-11)*
God created everything good and placed humans in a garden to live in close relationship with Him. But Adam and Eve chose to trust themselves instead of God, and sin entered the world. Relationships, creation, even our connection to God was broken. Yet even in judgment, God promised that one day, a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent and bring healing.
+This points to Jesus as the promised Rescuer who defeats sin, Satan, and death.

2. God Calls a Family and Makes a Promise *(Genesis 12-50)*
God chose a man named Abram (later Abraham) and gave a covenant to him: that he would have a large family, receive a land, and be a blessing to all nations. Though Abraham and his descendants were deeply flawed, God continued His promise through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.
+This points to Jesus as the true offspring of Abraham, through whom all nations are fully blessed.

3. God Rescues His People and Forms a Redeemed Nation *(Exodus-Deuteronomy)*
Generations later, Abraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up Moses to rescue them from oppression and slavery. God called His people into a relationship with Himself. He made a covenant with them, gave them the law, and instructed them in worship. He was forming a people who would live differently and show the world what it looked like to belong to Him.
+This points to Jesus as the greater Moses, who rescues us from slavery to sin and writes God's law on our hearts.

4. God Gives a Home and Promises a King *(Joshua-2 Chronicles)*
God brought His people into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. Over time, they asked for a king like the other nations. It was a disaster. But God graciously gave them David, with whom he made another covenant: one of David's descendants would rule forever. Solomon built the temple, but after his death, the kingdom split into two and began spiraling into idolatry and injustice again.
+This points to Jesus as the forever King from David's line, who reigns with justice and peace.

5. God Removes His People and Reminds Them of His Promise *(Ezra-Nehemiah)*
Because of their rebellion, God allowed His people to be conquered and taken into exile. First, it was the Northern Kingdom, Israel (to Assyria), then the Southern Kingdom, Judah (to Babylon). The temple was destroyed, and the glory of the kingdom faded. Yet God continued to speak through the prophets, reminding the people of His promise to restore them, give them new hearts, and send a Rescuer.
+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the new covenant, restores hearts, and fulfills every prophecy.

6. God Sends His Son and Fulfills His Promise *(Matthew-John)*
At just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world—born of a virgin, fully God and fully man. He perfectly obeyed the law, pointed us to the Father, and laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. On the third day, He rose again, proving that He is the Savior, the King, and the fulfillment of every covenant promise God has ever made.
+Jesus is the center of the story—all of Scripture leads to Him.

7. God Sends His Spirit and Builds His Church *(Acts-Jude)*
After rising from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to empower His followers. The early Church spread the good news of Jesus across the Roman world—planting churches, welcoming both Jews and Gentiles, and learning to live as God's new covenant people. Though imperfect, the Church carries Jesus' mission forward today.
+This points to Jesus as the risen King who gives the Spirit to dwell in us and send us on mission.

8. God Restores All Things and Dwells with His People *(Revelation)*
The story isn't over. One day Jesus will return to judge evil and make all things new. There will be a new heaven and new earth, where God's people from every tribe and nation will live with Him forever. There will be no more pain, no more death, and no more sin—just joy, justice, and unbroken peace.
+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the story to its perfect and eternal culmination.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

LEADER TIP

To grab your participants' attention, start your lesson by telling a story related to the lesson's main idea. We have provided you with three options in this section, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: THE LONDON BLITZ

The London Blitz was a period during World War II when Nazi Germany bombed London and other British cities night after night from 1940 into 1941. Families lived through air-raid sirens, blackouts, nights spent in shelters, damaged homes, disrupted work, and constant uncertainty. Life did not wait for circumstances to become normal again. People still had to cook meals, care for children, go to work, check on neighbors, make hard decisions, and carry on with the responsibilities directly in front of them.

During the Blitz, people did not have the luxury of waiting for life to settle down before they lived their lives. Marriages, families, work, loneliness, fear, and daily responsibilities all continued under the sound of sirens. The question was not "How do we get ideal circumstances?" The question was "How do we live faithfully today, with what is actually in front of us?"

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What kinds of circumstances make people think they could honor God better if their situation were different? Why do people think they could be a better Christian if life were easier?*
- *How do marriage, family, work, loneliness, or stress test a person's faithfulness? (Leader note: pick one category from this list to ask your group.)*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
The Blitz did not give people ideal circumstances, but it did force them to ask how to live faithfully in the circumstances they had. In 1 Corinthians 7:1–24, Paul spoke to believers navigating marriage, singleness, intimacy, separation, and difficult life situations. A disciple is built different because they seek to honor Christ where God places them.

OPTION 2: DANIEL IN BABYLON

Daniel was taken to Babylon as a young man, far from Jerusalem, far from the temple, and far from the life he likely imagined for himself. He did not get to choose the empire, the language, the training program, the food, or the pressure placed on him. Babylon was not the setting he would have picked for a faithful life.

But Daniel did not wait until he was back in Jerusalem to honor God. He practiced faithfulness in the place he had been exiled. In Daniel 1 that meant drawing a line when the king's food would compromise his faithfulness to the Lord. Later, it meant serving with integrity, praying when prayer became costly, and refusing to let an unwanted circumstance become an excuse for spiritual compromise.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Why do people sometimes use difficult circumstances as a reason to delay obedience?*
- *What makes it hard to honor God in a situation you did not choose?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
Daniel honored God in a place he would not have chosen and under pressures he could not control. In 1 Corinthians 7:1–24, Paul spoke to believers navigating marriage, singleness, intimacy, separation, and difficult life situations. A disciple is built different because they seek to honor Christ where God places them.

OPTION 3: THE HAND YOU ARE DEALT

In a card game, you do not get to choose the hand you are dealt. You may wish you had different cards, and sometimes another player's hand looks easier to play. But the game is not played with the cards you wish you had. It is played with the ones in your hand.

Life often feels that way. Some people are married and carrying pressures they did not expect. Some are single and wish their life looked different. Some are living with disappointment, loneliness, complicated family situations, or circumstances that feel limiting. It is easy to think, "If my situation were different, I could be faithful." But faithfulness begins with the life actually in front of us.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Why do people sometimes wait for life to change before they obey God?*
- *What would it look like to honor God with the hand currently in front of you?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
A card player does not control the hand they receive, but they are responsible for how they play it. In 1 Corinthians 7:1–24, Paul spoke to believers navigating marriage, singleness, intimacy, separation, and difficult life situations. A disciple is built different because they seek to honor Christ where God places them.

2 SET THE STAGE

LEADER TIP

This section provides the historical, cultural, and literary context needed to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

I. Greetings and Thanksgiving (1:1–9)
II. Problems in the church (1:10–6:20)
  A. Divisions and factions (1:10–4:21)
  B. Gross immorality (5:1–13)
  C. Litigation before pagan courts (6:1–11)
  D. Fornication with prostitutes (6:12–20)
III. Replies to questions from the Corinthians (7:1–14:40)
  A. Questions about marriage (7:1–40)
  B. Limitations of Christian liberty (8:1–11:1)
  C. Veiling of women in public worship (11:2–16)
  D. Disorderly behavior at the Lord's Supper (11:17–34)
  E. Exercise of spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40)
IV. The Resurrection of the Body (15:1–58)
  A. Centrality of Christ's resurrection (15:1–20)
  B. Sequence of resurrection events (15:21–28)
  C. The resurrection and suffering (15:29–34)
  D. Nature of the resurrection body (15:35–49)
  E. The believer's victory over death (15:50–58)
V. Conclusion (16:1–24)
  A. Collection for the believers at Jerusalem (16:1–4)
  B. Paul's plans for visiting Corinth (16:5–9)
  C. Exhortations, instructions, and salutations (16:10–24)[1]

CONTEXT

First Corinthians 7 begins a new section of the letter. Paul now addressed questions the Corinthians had written to him, beginning with marriage, singleness, sexual intimacy, separation, and the circumstances in which believers are called to follow Jesus. Some in Corinth seem to have believed that avoiding sexual intimacy was more spiritual, even within marriage. Paul corrected that idea by showing that marriage and singleness are both places disciples can honor God. Neither situation makes someone more spiritual by itself. Paul's repeated concern was that disciples live faithfully where God has placed them. A disciple is built different because marriage, singleness, intimacy, separation, and present circumstances all become places to honor the Lord.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

Sin leaves people restless in the life they have and convinced that fulfillment is found somewhere else. Marriage becomes a place for selfish demand, singleness becomes a place of discontent, sexuality becomes detached from covenant love, and difficult circumstances become excuses for unbelief and disobedience.

[1] F. Alan Tomlinson, "1 Corinthians," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1811.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Christ meets sinners in real life, not imagined life. He redeems the married, the single, the wounded, the tempted, the disappointed, and the stuck. His grace does not make every circumstance easy, but it gives His people a new way to live within them. In Jesus, we receive both mercy for our failures and power to honor God in the relationships, desires, limits, and responsibilities before us.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM: FAMILY, DATING, AND MARRIAGE

Family, dating, and marriage are not separate from discipleship. They are some of the most personal places our faith in Jesus is tested, formed, and displayed. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul spoke into real relational situations: married couples navigating intimacy, single believers practicing self-control, spouses facing separation, Christians married to unbelievers, and people wondering whether a change in status would make faithfulness easier.

Paul did not treat marriage as the only faithful path, and he did not treat singleness as second best. He gave dignity to both. Marriage is a place for mutual faithfulness, self-giving love, and honoring one another with care. Singleness is a place for devotion, self-control, and fruitful service to the Lord. In every situation, the call is not to compare circumstances but to honor God with the life and relationships actually entrusted to us. Disciples bring relational life under the authority of Jesus. Dating is not casual self-expression. Marriage is not selfish demand. Singleness is not wasted waiting. Family life is not spiritually neutral. Disciples are built different because they seek to reflect Christ in how they love, desire, commit, wait, forgive, remain faithful, and walk wisely in the circumstances in which God places them.

3 LOOK AT THE BOOK

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your group through Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the leader, work through all the exercises below to ensure you understand the text well.

1 Corinthians 7:1–7 Verse 1 signals a new movement in the letter: "Now for the matters you wrote about." Paul was now responding to questions the Corinthians had sent him. Their first question seems to involve marriage and sexual intimacy. The phrase, "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman," likely reflects either something the Corinthians had said or an idea some of them were promoting. After the sexual immorality addressed in chapters 5 and 6, some in Corinth may have swung in the opposite direction and concluded that abstaining from sexual intimacy was the more spiritual path, even within marriage.

Paul corrected that idea by speaking positively and practically about marital intimacy. Because sexual temptation is real, "each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband." Paul did not treat the body as dirty or marriage as spiritually inferior. Sexual intimacy belongs within the covenant of marriage and is one way husbands and wives care for each other.

Verses 3 and 4 are striking because Paul spoke with a mutuality that was unheard of in that culture. The husband had a responsibility to his wife, and the wife had a responsibility to her husband. In a world where husbands held the greater social status and power, Paul did not speak as though the wife's body existed merely for the husband's desire. He said the wife had authority over her husband's body, and the husband had authority over his wife's body. The point is not control but mutual self-giving. Marriage is not a place for selfish demand or spiritualized neglect. It is a place where each spouse is to consider the other.

Paul allowed temporary abstinence within marriage, but only under clear conditions: mutual consent, a limited time, and a purpose such as prayer. Even then, he told them to come together again so Satan would not tempt them because of lack of self-control. He was realistic about desire. He did not shame married couples for sexual intimacy and did not treat spiritual devotion as an excuse for ignoring one another.

When Paul said, "I say this as a concession, not as a command," he was likely referring to his permission for temporary abstinence, not to the whole teaching about marital faithfulness. He then said he wished all were as he was, but each person had their own gift from God. This introduces a major theme in the chapter. Marriage and singleness are not ranked as higher and lower forms of discipleship. Both are gifts, and both require faithfulness.

1 Corinthians 7:8–9 Paul next addressed the unmarried and widows. He said it is good for them to remain unmarried, as he did. This shows that Paul honored singleness as a good and meaningful situation, not merely a waiting room for marriage. Singleness can be received as a context for faithfulness to the Lord.

At the same time, Paul was not naïve about sexual desire. "If they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." Paul did not command marriage for everyone, nor did he treat singleness as the mark of greater or lesser spirituality. He recognized that different people have different gifts,

capacities, and situations. His concern was that each person honor God faithfully in their current life situation.

1 Corinthians 7:10–11 Paul then turned to married believers. "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord)." By this, Paul was likely referring to Jesus's own teaching on marriage and divorce. The command is that a wife must not separate from her husband, and a husband must not divorce his wife. Paul upheld the seriousness and permanence of marriage.

The parenthetical statement, "But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband," acknowledges that separation may occur. Paul was not writing a full treatment of every possible marital crisis in these verses. His main concern was to reject the idea that believers should casually dissolve marriages in pursuit of a supposedly more spiritual life. Marriage is a covenant to be honored, not a disposable arrangement when circumstances become difficult.

Paul's words also keep reconciliation in view. Where separation has happened, the options he named are remaining unmarried or being reconciled. The church should not treat marriage lightly, and married disciples should not assume changing their situation is automatically the path to greater holiness.

1 Corinthians 7:12–16 The next situation involves believers married to unbelievers. Paul said, "To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord)." This does not mean Paul's instruction was merely personal opinion or lacked authority. It means Jesus did not give a recorded command during His earthly ministry that directly addressed this situation. Paul now gave apostolic counsel for a question facing the Corinthian church.

If a Christian husband has an unbelieving wife who is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. Likewise, if a Christian wife has an unbelieving husband willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. Conversion to Christ does not automatically require a believer to leave an existing marriage to an unbeliever. Paul refused to make spiritual purity an excuse for abandoning a spouse.

Verse 14 explains that the unbelieving spouse is "sanctified" through the believing spouse, and the children are "holy." Paul was not saying the unbelieving spouse is automatically saved through the believer's faith. In this context, "sanctified" means the marriage is not defiled or illegitimate because one spouse is an unbeliever. The believing spouse does not need to view the marriage or children as spiritually contaminated. God can work in that household through the presence of the believer.

However, if the unbelieving spouse leaves, Paul said, "Let it be so." The believing spouse is "not bound in such circumstances." God has called His people to peace. Paul did not require the believer to preserve the marriage at all costs when the unbelieving spouse refuses to remain. His counsel holds together two truths: believers should not abandon marriage lightly, but they are also not enslaved to a situation where the other unbelieving spouse departs.

Paul ended this section with a question: "How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?" The line can be read as either hopeful or cautionary. In context, Paul seems to be saying believers cannot

control the salvation of their spouse. They should be faithful, but they cannot force an outcome. The call is to live faithfully before God without assuming a change in marital status is the only way forward.

1 Corinthians 7:17–20 Verse 17 gives the chapter's undergirding principle: "Each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them." Paul repeated this idea in different ways because the Corinthians needed to understand that discipleship is not dependent on changing one's status. Following Jesus does not mean everyone must become married, single, circumcised, uncircumcised, free, or socially repositioned.

Paul applied this first to circumcision. If someone was circumcised when called, he should not try to reverse that sign. If someone was uncircumcised when called, he should not seek circumcision. In Paul's words, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts." Ethnic and religious markers do not define faithfulness to Christ. Obedience to God does.

The repeated instruction, "Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them," must be understood carefully. Paul was not saying every circumstance is good or that no one should ever seek change. He was resisting the idea that a different status is necessary for faithfulness. The Christian life begins where God calls a person, and the first question is not "How do I escape this situation?" but "How do I obey Christ here?"

1 Corinthians 7:21–24 Paul then addressed those who were enslaved when called. He told them not to let it trouble them, but added, "Although if you can gain your freedom, do so." This matters, because Paul's counsel to remain in one's calling is not fatalism. He was not romanticizing slavery or telling people to avoid freedom if freedom was possible. He was saying even an enslaved believer is not spiritually inferior or excluded from meaningful discipleship.

Paul reframed status in light of Christ. "The one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person." In Christ, the enslaved believer possessed a deeper freedom than their social condition indicated. At the same time, "the one who was free when called is Christ's slave." Those with social freedom must remember that they were not autonomous. They belonged to Jesus.

Verse 23 echoes language from the previous chapter: "You were bought at a price." Because Christ has purchased His people, they must not become slaves of human beings. Paul was not denying the social reality of slavery in the Roman world. He was making a theological claim about ultimate ownership and allegiance. No earthly status has the authority to define a believer more deeply than Christ.

The section closes by repeating the main principle: "Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them." Paul's concern was not passivity but faithfulness. Marriage, singleness, mixed marriage, circumcision, uncircumcision, slavery, and freedom are different life situations, but none of them is outside the reach of Christ's lordship. A disciple honors God not by waiting for an ideal life but by living faithfully in the life God has placed before them.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1–24

7 Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to
have sexual relations with a woman.” 2 But since sexual immorality is
occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife,
and each woman with her own husband. 3 The husband should fulfill
his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4
The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to
her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority
over his own body but yields it to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other
except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may
devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan
will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a
concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all of you were as I am. But
each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has
that.

8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to
stay unmarried, as I do. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they
should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must
not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain
unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must
not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who
is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce
her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is
willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving
husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife
has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your
children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is
not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16
How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how
do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

17 Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever
situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them.
This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. 18 Was a man already
circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised.
Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be
circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing.
Keeping God’s commands is what counts. 20 Each person should
remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you—
although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For the one who
was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord’s freed person;
similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ’s slave. 23 You were
bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. 24 Brothers
and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the
situation they were in when God called them.

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people to discuss the Observation and Interpretation questions.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIPS

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1–7. What relationship instructions did Paul give to husbands and wives? What did he say singleness and marriage have in common?

Suggested Response: Paul said each man should have sexual relations with his own wife and each wife with her own husband. He said husbands and wives should fulfill their marital duty to each other and should not deprive each other except by mutual consent, for a time, and for prayer. Paul said both singleness and marriage are gifts from God. Each person has their own gift from God, one with one kind of gift and another with another kind. Notice that the context is not limited to a spiritual gift. Paul was talking about marital relationships and singleness. It is striking that Paul's connection is that relational status is a gift from God, not a lack or deficit.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: THE UNMARRIED, WIDOWS, AND UNEQUALLY YOKED

Read 1 Corinthians 7:8–16. What instructions did Paul give to the unmarried, widows, married believers, and believers married to unbelievers? Make a list for each relationship status.

Suggested Response: Paul said the unmarried and widows may remain unmarried as he is, but if they cannot control themselves, they should marry. To married believers, he said a wife must not separate from her husband, and a husband must not divorce his wife. He said believers married to unbelievers should not divorce if the unbelieving spouse was willing to live with them. If the unbelieving spouse left, Paul said to let it be so, because God has called believers to peace.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: REMAINING WHERE GOD CALLED YOU

Read 1 Corinthians 7:17–24. What repeated instruction did Paul give? What examples did he use?

Suggested Response: Paul repeatedly told believers to live in the situation the Lord had assigned to them and to remain in the situation they were in when God called them. He used the examples of circumcision and uncircumcision, slavery and freedom. He said keeping God's commands is what counts, that believers were bought at a price, and that each person should live as responsible to God in the situation in which they were called.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: MUTUAL FAITHFULNESS IN MARRIAGE

Why did Paul treat sexual intimacy within marriage as part of faithful discipleship?

Suggested Response: Paul was correcting both casual and overly spiritual views of the body. Remember from last week that there is a deep unity of the physical and spiritual in each person. Sexual intimacy is not something to treat as meaningless, but it also is not something married couples should reject as though holiness requires distance from each other. Within marriage, intimacy is part of mutual care, faithfulness, and self-giving love. From the creation account in Genesis, sexual union is part of God's plan for humanity to fulfill its purpose in His world (Genesis 1:28). Paul showed that disciples honor God not by separating marriage from faith but by bringing marriage under the authority of Christ.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: MARRIAGE OR SINGLENESS CAN BOTH BE FAITHFUL

How does Paul's counsel show that marriage and singleness can both be faithful situations for disciples?

Suggested Response: Paul did not treat marriage as the only faithful path, and he did not treat singleness as second best. Both marriage and singleness can be received as gifts from God and lived for His honor. Paul also gave practical guidance for difficult situations, including separation and marriage to an unbeliever. His concern was that believers pursue faithfulness and peace rather than assuming a different relationship status is always the path to greater holiness.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: CALLING OVER CIRCUMSTANCE

What did Paul mean when he told believers to remain in the situation they were in when God called them?

Suggested Response: Paul was not saying every circumstance is good or that believers should never seek change. He even said an enslaved person should gain freedom if possible. His point was that a person does not need a different status before they can obey Christ. Circumcision, uncircumcision, slavery, freedom, marriage, and singleness do not define a disciple more deeply than belonging to Jesus does. Faithfulness begins by honoring God in the situation where He has placed you.

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God calls them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: In 1 Corinthians 7:17, Paul told believers to live faithfully in the situation where God had placed them. What life situation are you facing that you wish were different? How can you live faithfully in the midst of it right now?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. Ask follow-up questions to encourage vulnerable sharing.

Some people wish they were married while others are struggling in marriage. Some wish for a different job, a different family situation, less life pressure, or to be out of a difficult life season. Paul reminded us that a change in our circumstances is not necessary for living faithfully. I can begin obeying Christ in the situation I am in today. Furthermore, Paul positioned life situations under God's sovereign control, not as mistakes or surprises.

QUESTION 2: In 1 Corinthians 7:3–5, Paul described marriage as a place of mutual care rather than selfish demand. We can expand this principle to all types of relationships (see John 13). Where do you need to practice more self-giving love in your friendships or with your coworkers? What would self-giving love look like in those relationships?

Suggested Response: I may need to practice self-giving love in dating, family, friendship, or work relationships, as examples. Self-giving love could mean listening more carefully, serving without keeping score, honoring another person's needs, or refusing to use distance, affection, or attention to control. Paul reminded us that relationships are not places for selfishness but places to honor God through faithful love.

QUESTION 3: Paul spoke honestly about desire, self-control, and temptation. Where do you need to be more honest with God about your temptations? How is honesty with God helpful?

Suggested Response: I may need to be honest about sexual desire, loneliness, frustration, discontentment, comparison, or the ways I look for comfort outside of God's design. Honesty before God helps me stop pretending, seek wisdom, and take faithful steps instead of letting hidden desires quietly shape my choices.

QUESTION 4: In 1 Corinthians 7:7–9, Paul treated both marriage and singleness as situations in which people can honor God. Which relationship status are you most tempted to idealize or resent?

Suggested Response: I may idealize marriage, singleness, dating, or a different season of life because it looks easier from the outside. I may also resent the situation I am currently in. Paul helps me remember that no relationship status automatically creates faithfulness. God can be honored in the life I have, not only in the life I imagine.

QUESTION 5: In 1 Corinthians 7:10–16, Paul gave guidance for complicated and painful relational situations. What would it look like to pursue faithfulness and peace in a good, but difficult relationship?

Suggested Response: Faithfulness and peace may involve patience, honest conversation, wise counsel, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, boundaries, or refusing to escalate conflict. It does not mean pretending everything is fine or ignoring serious harm. It means asking what obedience to Christ looks like in a real relationship with real challenges.

QUESTION 6: How can you live faithfully this week in whatever life situation you are experiencing?

Suggested Response: Faithfulness may look like loving my spouse with patience, honoring God in singleness, practicing self-control, staying present in my family, pursuing peace in a strained relationship, or refusing to compare my life to someone else's. Paul reminded us that obedience does not have to wait for a different season. God can be honored in the situation I am in right now.

QUESTION 7: How can our group help one another honor Christ in marriage, singleness, dating, family, and difficult circumstances?

Suggested Response: As a group, we can speak honestly without pretending every situation is easy. We can pray for one another, encourage faithfulness in ordinary responsibilities, and avoid treating one life stage as more spiritual than another. We can remind one another that Christ meets us in real life and gives grace to honor Him where we are.

4 CHALLENGE

LEADER TIP

End your study time with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

A disciple is built different because they learn to honor Christ where God has placed them. Faithfulness does not wait for the perfect set of circumstances. It asks what it means to follow Jesus in the life you actually have. Paul spoke to married believers, single believers, believers in complicated marriages, and believers in social situations they may not have chosen. None of them was told that faithfulness begins somewhere else.

This week look honestly at the situation God has placed before you.

- Where are you tempted to believe obedience would be easier if your life looked different?
- What relationship, desire, responsibility, or limitation needs to be brought under the authority of Christ?
- What would it look like to pursue faithfulness and peace without waiting for everything to change first?

Marriage is not automatic maturity. Singleness is not wasted waiting. Difficult circumstances are not outside the reach of God's grace. Jesus meets His people in real life and gives them what they need to honor Him there.

Let's pray.