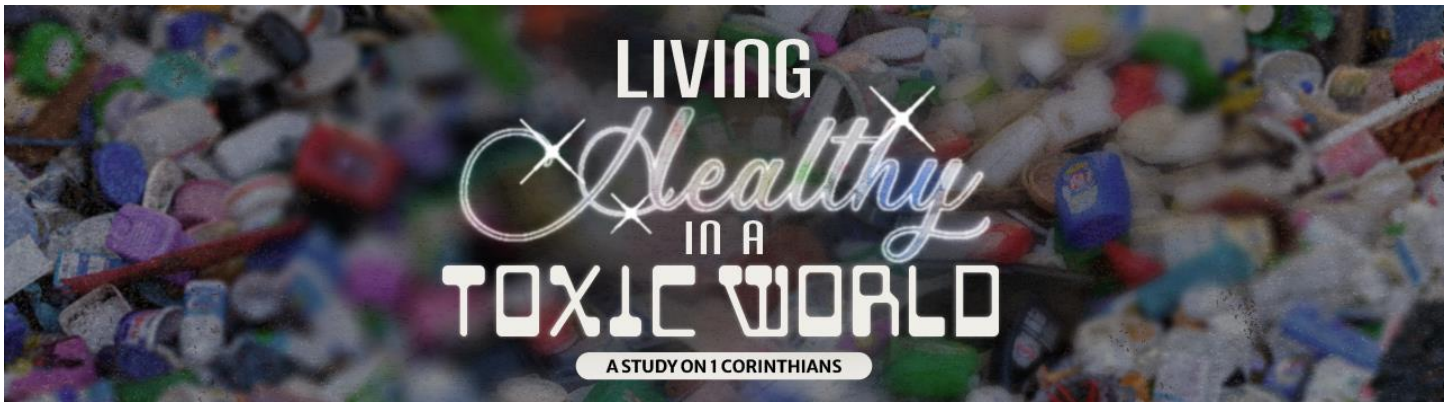




STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, August 23, 2026

Teaching: *Focus*

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7

5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: 1 Corinthians 9:1-27

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 10:14-33

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Friday: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's Word (The Bible), what do I need to do?
4. What is your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul addresses marriage, singleness, relationships, and other life circumstances, but his bigger concern is helping believers remain faithful to Christ. Life is full of distractions, and while not every distraction is sinful, even good things can pull our attention away from what matters most and cause us to drift. Paul gives us three ways to stay on course: 1) Stay focused by keeping Christ and His mission above everything else. 2) Stay the course by continuing to follow and serve Jesus. 3) Stay ready by remembering that life is short, Jesus is returning, and our time to live on mission is limited. Focus determines direction.

Questions: Icebreaker: If you had a completely free day on your schedule, what would you end up doing?

1. Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 together as a group. What do you notice about the way Paul views marriage and singleness? What do these verses teach us about how our relationships should be lived in a way that honors God?
2. Now read 1 Corinthians 7:8-16. What instructions does Paul give to those who are single, married, or married to an unbelieving spouse? What does faithfulness look like in all these situations?
3. In 1 Corinthians 7:17-25, Paul says that each person should "remain" or "continue" in the position they were "called." He says it 8 times! What do you think Paul means by this? (see Digging Deeper for help)
4. In 1 Corinthians 7:25-31, Paul talks about "the present crisis," the shortness of time, and the fact that "this world as we know it will soon pass away." How should remembering that life is temporary affect the way we live?
5. Read verse 35. Paul says he wants believers to serve the Lord "with as few distractions as possible." How does this verse help us understand the purpose behind everything Paul has said in this chapter?
6. What's pulling your attention away from Christ right now? What's getting more of your energy than your relationship with God?

CEDAR VALLEY

Memorizing Scripture provides spiritual strength, guides your daily life, and equips you for ministry in everyday moments. For

the rest of the year, we're switching things up! Each week, we encourage **you** to choose one verse from the weekly Key Scripture that stands out to you and commit it to memory. Before you choose your verse, ask God to reveal the one you most need to hide in your heart. Over time, you'll be amazed at how God brings that verse to mind—whether to strengthen and encourage you or to help you encourage someone else.

DIGGING DEEPER | Question 3—What does Paul mean when he says, “remain as you were when God first called you”?

Dr. Gordon Fee, a New Testament scholar, says being a Christian does not mean that you have to change your circumstances in order to be faithful to God. When Christ calls us, He meets us right where we are and frees us to live for Him *within* our current circumstances. Paul is not saying that we should never make changes in our lives; he is saying that we should not think our circumstances determine our spiritual value or our standing with God. Our job, our marital status, our social position, or our background do not make us more or less valuable to God. Before Christ, something like circumcision could have been viewed as an important religious distinction. But in Christ, it no longer gives someone greater spiritual status. The gospel changes how we see our circumstances: our circumstances do not determine our worth, our identity, or our relationship with God. Christ does.

—paraphrased from Gordon Fee's commentary on 1 Corinthians (Fee, Gordon. *NICNT. The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids: 1987.

Paul addresses many things in 1 Corinthians related to their questions about marriage, divorce, singleness and slavery. It's difficult to cover everything, but here is a helpful summary of what we can learn from this chapter from Dr. Lucy Peppiatt, a New Testament scholar and President of Westminster Theological Centre in England. (taken from her class on the Bible Project Website)

Key Takeaways: Paul's teaching on marriage is revolutionary in his culture—he teaches complete and radical equality between men and women within marriage. According to Paul, marriage is an option, not an expectation. Being married to an unbeliever is not grounds for divorce. It seems Paul thought enslaved people's spiritual freedom was tantamount. However, there is evidence that he would have also encouraged people to seek freedom from slavery if at all possible.

Misguided Abstinence: Here Paul is addressing something they've talked to him about in their letter: “It is good for a man not to touch a woman, not to have sexual relations with a woman.” This is a bit confusing because on the one hand there are men who are visiting prostitutes and now this. We're not entirely sure what the scenario is here. Are there those who are abstaining from sex within marriage?

Paul's Directives Regarding Marriage: From Paul's teaching in this chapter, we can discern several principles about marriage.

1. Paul emphasizes the complete and radical equality of marriage. Paul speaks of “authority” in marriage only here and it is entirely equal and mutual.
2. Marriage is monogamous.
3. Marriage is an option, not an expectation. Paul values singleness and virginity, but not if it's going to be impossible to live with.
4. Being married to an unbeliever is not grounds for divorce. Somehow, and we're not sure what Paul has in mind here, the unbelievers are incorporated into the covenant through their spouse and the same goes for children (v. 14).

Debate about Position of Slaves: Verse 21 on the position of slaves is highly contested.

1 Corinthians 7:21 NIV “Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.”

There are those who see Paul advocating that a person should seek their freedom and those who believe Paul was telling slaves to remain as they are. It seems Paul thought their spiritual freedom was tantamount, but there is evidence that he would have encouraged people to seek material freedom as well. We don't know what “the present crisis” is in verse 26.

Singleness: In many contexts this perspective is overlooked or even inverted, but Paul does not elevate the status of married people or trivialize single people. On the contrary, Paul privileges the single life. We are not sure why Paul uses the term “virgin” except he seems to be making a point here—the unmarried and the virgin, she should remain as she is.