Growing in Grace, Growing in Community -- Life Lessons on Maturity with the Corinthians

***Marriage: What changes because of Jesus?*** 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

Here Paul begins to take up the questions the Corinthians had asked. Apparently, some of them thought that becoming a Christian should change the way they viewed marriage, and not necessarily in good and helpful ways. He corrects their thinking by answering five different, but related, questions. . .

❖ Now that I’m a Christian, should I live a celibate life, even though I’m married?

“NO!” Intimacy is a proper ingredient in any marriage. vv. 1-9

❖ Now that I’m a Christian, do I have to stay married?

“YES!” Christian commitment intensifies and sanctifies all commitments. vv. 10-11

❖ Now that I’m a Christian, should I divorce my unbelieving spouse?

“NO!” You can’t force an unbelieving spouse to stay, but don’t drive him/her away. He or she has a “connection” to God through you and may find saving grace. vv. 12-16

❖ Now that I’m a Christian, is there a principle that should guide my potential life-changes?

“YES!” The principle is Contentment. vv. 17-24

❖ Now that I’m a Christian, should I get married in the first place?

“MAYBE.” But remember the risks, and if you do, marry only a true believer. vv. 25-40

**Growth Principle #9: The spiritually mature Christian views marriage with realism, respect, contentment,**

**and the unwavering desire to please God.**

***1. Marriage is a Creation Ordinance, not a social construct.***

Paul and Jesus (Matthew 19) both refer to Genesis 2 in their analysis of marriages and why they implode. Clearly, God intends marriage as a permanent relationship between one man and one woman which ends only at the death of one of them. Everything in these words to the Corinthians is based upon this profound reality which persons and cultures ignore, redefine, or pervert to their peril. Romans 1:26, 27

***2. It takes two to make a marriage, only one to end it.***

 Paul envisions that an unbeliever can end a marriage by abandoning his mate, but says a believer should never do so. However, it is possible for a marriage partner to make a further relationship impossible. At times like these, when serial adultery, physical abuse, or drug addictions terminate the relationship, this is a form of abandonment which frees the spouse. Jesus attributes divorce to “hardness of heart,” which should never describe the condition of a believer. But we cannot demand that the unbeliever remain. Matthew 19:8

***3. Marriage, like any intimate relationship, brings joy and, also, trouble.***

 Paul is not trashing marriage (v. 28), just saying that it comes with its share of trouble. (Proverbs 18:22 still applies!). His saying that “the time is short” does NOT refer to the Second Advent of the Lord, but His First, for in Him, the old is passing away and all is becoming new. 1 Cor. 7:28-31; Romans 13:11-14

***4. Contentment is Life’s Key.***

“Comparison is the thief of joy,” and Paul is wise to encourage all of us to bloom where we are planted. The grass is not greener anywhere than where the Good Shepherd has led us. Phil 4:10-13



* ***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. Do you have a “Grass is always greener” story to share? Why do others’ circumstances look better?

2. What pressures does our society place on singles to be married, and feel out of place if they are not?

 How do we balance “it’s not good for the man to be alone” of Genesis 2 with Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:28-35