



redeemed

bible in 3 & 1 Corinthians 5-7

SCPC term 2 2008

sunday 29th june 2008

study 8 GOD, SEX & SINGLENESS 1 Cor 7:25-40

KEY VERSE FOR SERIES: "...you are not your own; you were bought at a price..." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

While last week's study was mainly about marriage with some reference to singleness, this week is mainly about singleness with some reference to marriage. i.e. despite the titles, in reality the whole chapter interweaves the single/marriage comparison. Hence the repetition of the big idea. In some ways the real point of the chapter is bigger than either marriage or singleness and we miss the point if we think Paul is simply comparing these options for us to weigh up. He is actually trying to shift our attention from our circumstances to who we are in Jesus—and to serving him. Most especially, he is trying to shift our focus from our *present* circumstances (see the key verse) in this fallen world and to remember the future we all have in Christ. That should change our priorities whatever our situation. A rival for key verse status is verse 31 which speaks of not being "engrossed" in the things of this world. That will be a strong focus of application in the talk and from that point of view we can see that what Paul says in commending the single life has a strong challenge for all of us.

some notes on questions

Q1. Um... it's a little embarrassing disagreeing with yourself publicly but having studied these verses more intensively since writing the study I now feel I have a better grasp of what they're saying—and view it differently to what I said in question 1. Apologies. I explained this a little in the talk 22/6 and will do so a bit more 29/6 — but the gist is that I think Paul is saying something SIMPLER than is normally (and I previously) thought. Rather than getting single people to ask "do I have the gift of singleness?" he is *telling* them: "you have the gift of singleness". i.e. unlike the question says (!) he's not envisaging a subset of people who are single who have that gift (as a *future* thing), but rather all single people should consider their *present* circumstances as a gift from God (i.e. don't resent it and try to change your circumstances). And, of course, he is saying the same to married people. After all, the verse doesn't actually say "gift of singleness" but "one has this gift, another has that". More on Sunday! Feel free to read out this apology/retraction and get your group to re-write question one and pass it on to me for next time!!

Q2. Make sure you read these verses—they really help give the context and show that he is just continuing to apply to a different group of people the same principle—be content where you are and serve Christ where you are. Q3. We saw last week that part of the reason for these 'qualifications' is to acknowledge when he is repeating something Jesus said and when he isn't. Here we see another reason: sometimes there is no black and white command (e.g. "never get married") but something to commend (it's good to remain as you are). Wisdom is needed—which is hard for the Pharisee within us that sometimes craves a rules because they look simpler.

Q4. Changed circumstances in this life aren't "the grass is greener" solution—this world is passing away—the really green grass is being prepared for us in the next!

Q5. This teaching is not always easy to hear for some but it's important we see that it IS what the Bible teaches: Christians only marry Christians. Doing otherwise is worse than foolish—it's unbiblical and therefore disobedient to God. We ignore this truth to the peril of those involved.

Q6-8. Leave plenty of time for these questions to see that, while singleness is the context of the discussion at this point, Paul's bigger call to changed priorities hits us all.

small group bible study leaders' notes