

The Weekly Word
September 16-22, 2013

Another week with the ever exciting Corinthians. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, September 16: 1Corinthians 7– All things marriage...

Well ‘all things’ is a bit of an exaggeration, but this chapter is devoted to many issues that result from marriage. Its raw honesty is refreshing.

Toward the end of the chapter, there was one brief clause that pulled me in. Verse 39, discussing the context of remarriage after a spouse’s death Paul notes, *if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord*. It was the last 6 words that grabbed me.

He must belong to the Lord... Paul’s counsel, marry within the faith.

In our multicultural and multi-faith world of political correctness, these words seem so restrictive, so narrow, so oppressive. But are they wise? Do they make sense?

I am happily married for more that 33 years, so these words don’t really have direct meaning to me, yet I found myself engaging them in thought and prayer this morning.

Marry within the faith... the reasoning is sound. If faith is the core of who we are, which true faith will be... if our faith is the lifeblood of how we live, our guide for all seasons, then it makes sense that we should marry someone with a similar core.

Marriage is all about two becoming one and there is no way to blend two religious faiths (whatever they might be) with each other and have both faiths remain pure and true to their historic roots.

Marriage brings with itself enough issues, situations and complexities just melding two lives into one. Why add the intensity of divergent faiths?

To put it another way... is your faith so low on your hierarchy of importance that you are willing to compromise, bend and change your faith for the sake of your spouse?

Think about it... particularly if you are not yet married or are considering marriage.

Lord, I am so thankful for my wife. She has been a gift from You. Her voice and her lifestyle have consistently drawn us closer to You, even as I hope and pray my voice and consistency have done.

Thank You for this woman with whom I can share everything and with whom I live for You daily. Through your name Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, September 17: 1Corinthians 8– Knowledge & love...

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (1b). What an interesting statement. I spent time contemplating this and the more I did the more it resonated.

Knowledge does puff up. The more I know, the more I think of my myself and the more I think of myself the more my head swells with ME.

Love on the other hand builds up... it builds others up because it thinks and acts for the betterment of others. Love is supposed to be the hallmark of Christ-followers. We are directed to love neighbors and even enemies. We are to speak truth but to do so in love.

Love is key, because love builds up.

And yet here on this orb called earth, more often than not, a person is measured by his/her knowledge more than his/her love.

Oops, we apparently have this backwards from God's point of view...

Think about it.

Lord, help me grow in love. That's a big enough prayer for today, Lord. Help me grow in love. Amen.

Wednesday, September 18: 1Corinthians 9– Singular focus...

In chapter 7 Paul mentioned how those who are married have multiple responsibilities to serve Christ and to care for their spouse. He advised not marrying, if that were possible, so that people could be singularly focused on serving Jesus (see 7:28, 32, etc).

Today we get a glimpse of what singular focus looks like for Paul. *Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (19-23).*

I sat silent before these words. My focus on advancing God's kingdom is not even in the same zip code as Paul. Even after I cut myself a break for being married and raising a family, since these necessitate a split focus, I am not in Paul's zip code. His life had a singular focus... making disciples... house, home, retirement, vacations, hobbies, there is not a hint of these in Paul's self-description here or anywhere in his writings for that matter.

Like I said I am not even in his zip code. I don't even know who to pray today...

Help me, Lord, help me...

Thursday, September 19: 1Corinthians 10– Beneficial and constructive...

Considering that we are not under the law. Does that mean anything goes? Obviously not! But how do I decide what goes and what doesn't? One good thing about the law is that the law made it clear what was and what was not approved.

Paul gives a wonderfully concise answer for us who are no longer under the law... *"Everything is permissible"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others (23-24).*

First, Paul says consider what is beneficial or constructive. I assume he means what is spiritually beneficial and constructive. Questions like.... Will it help me grow closer to the Lord? Will it build my faith or the faith of another sister or brother? These are great starters in answering if it will be beneficial and/or constructive.

Secondly, Paul suggests we consider the effects of what we are considering doing, based on how it will impact others. We should seek the good of others.

As I think about Paul's counsel, I find the simplicity of his approach so helpful...

Is it beneficial for my spiritual growth and does it benefit others...

Thank you, Lord, for this straightforward approach to living in Your kingdom and living well for You. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Friday, September 20: 1Corinthians 11–...

Who are the authors you read? Who, in your business, do you listen to, watch, or track? Who's blogs do you read? What columnists do you frequent? Whose Twitter feeds do you follow? Who are you emulating? Who are your role models?

These people are shaping you and are likely having a more profound affect on you than you think.

Paul wrote simply, *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ* (1).

Who we follow, who we idolize, who we pay attention to, matters.

Lord, are the people I am following leading me closer to You? This is the question pounding in my head.

Oh, God, I pray so...

Lord, those who are not, help me to recognize that and replace them with more Christ-like role models.

Thank You for those people who are leading me closer to You. I pray this Jesus, in Your name. Amen.

Saturday, September 21: 1Corinthians 12– Life without toes...

When I was in middle school there was a teacher we all made fun of. His name really helped, too, Mr. Weredy (pronounced Were-dee). Behind his back, when we were talking and making fun of him, we pronounced it 'weird-ee.' But what really amped up our 'behind-the-back fun-making' was the way he walked. It is hard to describe on paper. He walked kind of like Herman Munster of Adams Family TV fame. He always placed his feet flat on the ground in a sort of mechanical manner. He never ran, never walked briskly, never leaned forward, like we all do and pushed off with his toes. And when he stood still, he teetered a bit as if he was unstable.

As middle schoolers we were merciless behind his back... until we learned some of his story.

Turns out Mr. Weredy walked the way he did because he didn't have any toes. They were amputated because they developed gangrene while on an expedition in northern Alaska. I guess he was fortunate to be alive.

When we learned this, it didn't seem cool to make fun of the man. We also learned about the important part toes play in the human body. He walked the way he did because he didn't have toes to balance himself.

Who would have thought that our little toes were so important? Apparently even the loss of a couple of toes can cause a problem with balance.

Paul describes each of us as believers as a part of the body and the body is incomplete without each of us. Oh, the church can function if we are not functioning, but it does require compensation by the other parts of the body and the body (church) probably won't function as God intended but it gets by.

God's Word to me... play my part and fulfill the body function God intends me to play.

Are you playing the part God intends for you? If not, the body is suffering and others are compensating for your lack.

Think about it. I am...

God, You made me with certain gifts and abilities. Help me to use them for the common good and not to bury them like the lazy steward in Jesus' parable in vvvv.

Lord, I want to hear 'well done good and faithful steward, enter your master's happiness' and that will only happen as I do those things You have me to do for You.

Help me, Holy Spirit. Help me to be faithful to You every day. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, September 22, 2013, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.