

(1st Corinthians 7:17-24)
“Stop Waiting to Obey God”

~ INTRO ~

AS WE CONTINUE...

- Learning how to **apply Christianity**...
 - This chapter can be summarized like this:
- 1) Honor God's design in marriage (vv. 1-16)
- 2) Be faithful where God has called you (vv. 17-24)
- 3) Make wise decisions in light of eternity (vv. 25-40)

NOW...

- Today's study answers one big question...
 - About the direction of life's choices.

ONE OF THE GREATEST STRUGGLES OF LIFE...

- Comes in the area of contentment.
 - (Proverbs 27:20) “... *the eyes of man are never satisfied.*”

AND PAUL'S TONE IS CALMING.

- He's reassuring anxious believers...
 - That they don't need to reinvent their lives to be pleasing to Christ.

~ STUDY ~

SO... PAUL...

- Addresses a real struggle the Corinthian Church was having.
 - Issues with contentment, calling, & faithfulness.

THESE ARE AREAS OF LIFE...

- That every generation needs help and direction with...
 - As we discover what God's will for our life is.

SO... PAUL PIVOTS...

- From last week's questions about marriage...
 - AND begins to speak to the broader principle:

*Spiritual life is not determined by changing circumstances,
but by faithfully following Christ where He has placed you.*

IDEA #1 – GOD MEETS US WHERE WE ARE (v.17)

THE CORINTHIANS...

- Over-spiritualized their perspectives.

BY ASKING QUESTIONS LIKE:

- Should married people stop having sex?
- Should we divorce to become more spiritual?
- Should singles avoid marriage?
- Does social status matter?

PAUL...

- Brings them back to reality.
 - By teaching them that Christian maturity...
 - Is measured by obedience NOT by changing life situations.

LESSONS:

- 1) Our present circumstances don't prevent God's work in our lives.
- 2) Wherever He has allowed us to be today...
 - That's where He calls us to obeying Him.

IDEA #2 – GOD MEASURES FAITHFULNESS (vv.18-23)

THREE TIMES...

- Paul speaks about “*remaining where we are called*” (vv.17-24).

WHY?

BECAUSE WE'RE WIRED...

- To believe that changing circumstances will fix our problems.

IN THESE VERSES...

- Paul uses an illustration to prove his point – *circumcision*.
- To the **Jewish-Christian**...
 - Circumcision represented religious advantage.

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- To the **Greek-Christians...**
 - Removing circumcision represented cultural acceptance.

HIS POINT IS...

- Don't think that becoming more Jewish makes you more spiritual.
- Don't think that being less Jewish makes you more spiritual.

WHAT MATTERS...

- Is walking with God (obeying His word).
 - External status does NOT determine spiritual maturity.

THE BIBLE IS NOT TEACHING US...

- To never change jobs
- To never move
- To never marry
- To never improve our circumstances

POINT BEING...

- Don't think changing your external circumstances...
 - Is what you need to do before you can obey God.

THINK ABOUT HOW PRACTICAL THIS IS.

- People make life choices that pull them away from church.
 - I'll get more serious about church when work settles down.
 - I'll start serving once the kids get older.
 - I'll begin giving after I pay off my debt.

PAUL'S ANSWER TO THE CHURCH IS – NO!

- Start obeying today.

THIS IS WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES US.

- **Paul refuses to make freedom a prerequisite for faithfulness.**

(vv.21-23)

- If you're a slave when Christ saves you...
 - Don't think – *“I can't serve Jesus until I'm free.”*
- Faithfulness doesn't wait for freedom.

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PAUL IS **NOT AGAINST** CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES.

- He's **against** believing that changing circumstances is necessary...
 - Before you can fully obey Christ.

LESSONS:

- Circumcision doesn't make you more spiritual.
- Freedom doesn't make you more spiritual.
- Marriage doesn't make you more spiritual.
 - Obeying Christ is what matters.

IDEA #3 – GOD WANTS OBEDIENCE TODAY (v.24)

The Christian life isn't waiting for tomorrow.

- Obedience always begins today – “*remain with God.*”

Where has God placed you today?

- (Marriage / work / church / etc.)
 - Wherever you are... walk with Christ there.

SOME CORINTHIANS BELIEVED...

- They would be more acceptable to God if they divorced...
 - An unbelieving spouse.
- Some thought they would be holier if they never married.
- Others thought they would be closer to God if they changed life status.

BUT PAUL TEACHES THE CHURCH...

- That the goal isn't a different life...
 - Rather it's faithfulness in the life God has given.
- His concern is not preserving social structures.
 - His concern is faithful discipleship in whatever circumstances...
 - We find ourselves.

DON'T CHASE A DIFFERENT LIFE...

- Thinking it will make you a better Christian.

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~ IN CLOSING ~

Don't wait for tomorrow to become the Christian...

- He's called you to be today.

God is far more concerned with your faithfulness...

- Than He is with changing your circumstances.

God isn't waiting for your circumstances to change before He can use you.

- Because the issue has never been your situation.

The issue has always been your willingness to obey Christ...

- In the situation you're in.

Stop postponing obedience until life looks the way you want it to.