

## **1 Corinthians 7:17-24**

### **Relationship Outro**

**Introduction:** Over the past few months we have been considering what the Bible teaches us about personal relationships. We have seen how the Bible upholds singleness as a very positive, joy filled, fulfilling life to live. We have seen both the hardships and beauty of marriage and family. We have considered the importance of true friendship that brings accountability, correction, and affirmation. We looked at what the Bible says about sexual purity. As has been stated the Bible teaches that God is both the architect and builder of relationships therefore in order to have a deep understanding and deep meaningful relationships we need to consider what their purpose is. Throughout these teachings we've seen that whether we are dealing with sexual temptation, marital issues, loneliness in our singleness, discord in the family, building true friendships or losing "so-called" friends, that each of these experiences is teaching us (or meant to teach us) to lean on Christ more and more. It's meant to point us to the only love that can truly satisfy. It is meant to drive us to Jesus for wisdom, forgiveness, power, and for love to be what he has called us to be.... I don't know if we realize this but every relationship we have in our lives is meant to drive us to Christ- especially the ones in which we are failing most...

**When we started this series I gave four reasons or goals for it:**

**That each of us might find contentment in Christ in whatever state we are in. (Philippians 4:11-13)**

**That we might use our status whether single, married, married with children, married without children, single parent, divorced, or widowed to glorify God and to serve others. (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)**

**That we might consider other's struggles, loneliness, frustrations, as legitimate and seek to support one other in these different callings and seasons rather than criticize or ostracize. (Philippians 2:3-11)**

**That we would not be a segregated congregation. That we would have a balanced, biblical view of singleness, marriage and family - that we**

**would see each and every one as equals, brothers and sisters that have gifts, callings perspective and a legitimate role to play in the advancement and displaying of the kingdom of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-16)**

I hope through these studies that we have set a precedent for our Church to value all the different statuses and relationships that we find ourselves in, and to work together to support one another in them. I hope that conversations will continue and new conversations will start about how we are to live as the people of God in our personal relationships.

Something I've come to realize as we've gone through this series is not only is God the beginning or source of all relationships - but he is also the end of all relationships - they all point ultimately to him. God is the true love and security that our hearts long for in seeking marriage. God is the true friend who always lets us in and never lets us down. God is the ultimate parent who's love and approval we crave; who's love and approval we have because of what Jesus did for us on the cross to bring us into the family of God. None of these relationships are ends in themselves but each are to show us something about the nature and love of God, each one is meant to point us further up, further in, toward the the great love of God.

I was reminded of this quote by C.S. Lewis from his book Mere Christianity- "The Christian says, 'Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or to be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that country and to help others to do the same."

As we've said throughout this series God is using all of these relationships to mold and shape us into the image of Christ; but God is also wanting to use these relationships in our lives to tell His story to the watching world. The story of His never stopping, never giving up, un-breaking, always and forever love.

I'll never forget years ago... (Story of the Girl at Hopmonk)

What did she see? Something that drew her, it wasn't apologetics (not that we are against apologetics), it wasn't gospel preaching, it was an ordered life, with the expression of true love, joy, and commitment - security... It was a life, a family that is patterned after Jesus Christ, and when she saw it, she wanted it.. People are looking for God, they just don't know it...our lives are to remind them, we are to be that fragrance of Christ, that light of the world, we are to point people back to God.

As Augustine said, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." This isn't just a truth about Christians this is a truth about all people.

"Whatever people say about God - whether they ignore him, deny him, hate him, or scorn him - we always know two things about them: first, they themselves are made in the image of God; and second, that they are living in God's reality. So whatever they claim, we can be sure that there is both truth and falsehood in their belief, and the tension can be found somewhere....As we talk and the conversation goes deeper, there will be a point at which the fact of the tension goes beyond providing us with a meeting point and becomes a pressure point. It then reveals where the treasure of the person's heart is and where their beliefs clash with the safeguarding of their treasure.." -Os Guinness

## **1. Embracing the Life God has given You**

- 1. 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 "...Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. 18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. 19 For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. 20 Each one should remain**

in the condition in which he was called. Were you a bondservant<sup>[d]</sup> when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)  
22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants<sup>[e]</sup> of men. 24 So, brothers,<sup>[f]</sup> in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.”

1. Paul exhorted the Church in Corinth to remain in the place where they were. What is Paul saying here? He saying be content in the station that God has called you. why? Because we are not our own, as he says, we've been bought at a price. Paul reminded the Corinthians of this same truth one chapter earlier. We are not our own we belong to God Therefore we are not to live to please ourselves, we are not to live as though we belong to ourselves.
  1. **That means that first of all that we are not to determine for ourselves what is right and wrong, we give up the right to determine that, and rely fully on God's word.**
  2. **We give up the operating principle we use everyday in life, and we stop putting ourselves first and we always put first what pleases God and what loves our neighbor.**
  3. **It also means that we are to have no part of our lives that is immune from this self giving, were supposed to give ourselves wholly to him, body and soul.**
  4. **Lastly it means we trust God through thick and thin, both in life and in death.”**
2. Paul believed in personal limitations - “His antidote for this all too human tendency was to stay within the limits of his own life and calling.”
3. **Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:13-14, “We, however will not boast beyond measure but according to the measure of the area of ministry that God has assigned to us... For we are not overextending ourselves..since we have come to you with the gospel of Christ’**
4. Each of us has been given an area by God within which to work. We are placed in a context, in a community, in institutions and webs of responsibility. And Paul is reminding us that this is good. The script of our culture tells us that we can only find self-fulfillment when we

break away from these limitations, but Paul is reversing that false view of life. Limitations and the defined space of living and ministering that God gives us with in the institution of the church is a gift. God places us in institutions, relationships, responsibilities, to teach us and shape us into Christlikeness.

5. Ruth Haley Barton writes, "One of the ways to recognize narcissism within ourselves is to notice when we have not yet accepted the field, the sphere of action, that God has given us - the opportunities and the limits of life in this body, this community, this set of relationships...this place where we have been called by God to serve. Narcissistic leaders are always looking longingly at someone else's field as somehow more worthy or more indicative of success. They are always pushing the limits of their situation rather than lovingly working the field they have been given...our unwillingness to live within limits - both personally and in community - is one of the deepest sources of depletion and eventual burnout."

## 2. **What does it mean to lead the life that the Lord has assigned?**

1. First, recognize that wherever you are in your life whether work, school, relationship status. It isn't an accident or a stepping stone. God knew that you would be here at this time and is in control of your circumstance. Trust in his sovereign wisdom and goodness.
2. Secondly, it means to embrace that, to own it. What I mean is to not say and think - when this busy season of my life is over then I'll serve God, then I'll seek God. Or when I get married then I'll really be useful to God; when I'm Thirty or Fifty, then I'll be able to serve God. There is a human tendency to discount where we are currently in life. God has called you to be right where you are. Today is the day to seek the Lord, today is the day to serve one another and encourage one another in our singleness, or marriage, or family, our victories our hardships whatever state we are in... Today is the day to proclaim the gospel through our lives and our words.. What matters for us is obeying the Lord right here, right now, in this season of life. As Paul exhorted the Corinthians - In light of the the resurrection of Jesus Christ, his victory and the assurance of the coming Kingdom of God - The filling up, the hope of Glory.. **"my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."**

1. “If we Christians are right about the universe, the sexual revolution cannot keep its promises. Unhinged sexual utopianism can only go so far before it leaves the ground around it burned over, like every other utopianism. We the Church, need to be ready, after all of this, to point a light to the older paths, toward water that can satisfy. We need to be a John 3:16 people in a John 4:16 world.” -Russell Moore

**Conclusion: “Trust in the Slow Work of God Above all, trust in the slow work of God We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability and that it may take a very long time. And so I think it is with you. your ideas mature gradually – let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don’t try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow. Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.” - Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. (1881-1955)**