

Discussion Questions Set #1

“Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.” (1 Corinthians 7:25-28)

“Marriage should be honored by all ...” (Hebrews 13:4)

In sermon, we learned about two important factors operational at Corinth:

- a. a teaching was present within the Corinthian church that suggested that engaging in the physical – even in permissible ways – was to one’s spiritual detriment, perhaps even to be regarded as sinful. The result was that there were some in the Corinthian church wondering if the engaged would be sinning against the Holy Spirit if they married.
 - b. Paul’s advice to singles is based upon the reality of a “present crisis” – likely some form of increased local persecution of Christians - within Corinth.
1. Prior to this sermon, were you aware of the seeming discrepancy surrounding the place, value and significance of marriage within the church? What was your understanding of marriage and singleness for the follower of Jesus?
 2. How does locating Paul’s advice within a “present crisis” help us apply this text? What problems emerge if we understand this as a “thus sayeth the Lord” sort of instruction?
 3. How does this understanding of the theological situation in Corinth affect the way you interpret the text? What does this background information add to our understanding?

Discussion Questions Set #2

“For this world in its present form is passing away. I would like you to be free from concern”. (1 Corinthians 7:31)

“The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.” (Luke 17:20-21)

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

Paul very often presents his material within an emerging or immanent kingdom framework, whereby aspects of the kingdom of God are already in play, while a fuller experience of all of this is immanent. We often speak of this as a “yet, but not yet” reality.

1. How might an emerging/immanent kingdom mindset affect Paul’s teaching here? Consider potential differences between this teaching from an “imminent return of Christ” position versus a “2,000 years later” position.
2. Why is it important that we move towards an emerging/immanent kingdom understanding of our faith? Why might it be important that we not put too much stock in things that are “passing away”?
3. How might this allow us to live “free from concern”?
4. Are we allowing ourselves to be defined by a passing world or are we allowing the “immanent kingdom” to shape our living? Discuss.
5. Paul mentions that things we often define ourselves by such as marital status, gender, ethnicity or social status ought not to cause division within the church as they are no longer definitive within Christ’s kingdom. How does this understanding help us interpret Paul’s teaching on marriage and singleness?

Discussion Questions Set #3

“Live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 7:35)

1. What do you think Paul means through his use of the following two terms:
 - a. A right way?
 - b. Undivided devotion to the Lord?