



FREE TO

LOVE

1 CORINTHIANS 7-11

Title	Passage	Sermon	Study
1. Marriage	Study 1: 1 Cor 7:1-24	Jul 16	Jul 17-22
2. Singleness	Study 2: 1 Cor 7:25-40	Jul 23	Jul 24-29
3. Don't be a stumbling block	Study 3: 1 Cor 8:1-13	Jul 30	31-5 Aug
4. All things to all people	Study 4: 1 Cor 9:1-23	Aug 6	Aug 7-12
5. Flee idolatry	Study 5: 1 Cor 9:24-11:1	Aug 13	Aug 14-19
6. Hats or no hats?	Study 6: 1 Cor 11:2-16	Aug 20	Aug 21-26
7. Remembering well	Study 7: 1 Cor 11:17-34	Aug 27	28-2 Sep



Some helpful background to this section of 1 Corinthians

Friends, I hope you are well. For the some of the 6pmer's this series is a follow on from last year. For others they will be coming in a little blind. Therefore, it will be helpful to remind everyone of what 1 Corinthians is about in general and then to talk more specifically about the section we are looking at this term in the 4:15 and 6pm congregations.

1 Corinthians 1:1-2 helps us to know who this letter is from and who it is to.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ² To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--their Lord and ours:

Paul and Sosthenes (most likely Paul's scribe) are writing to the church of God in Corinth (most likely a group of house churches). He is writing to remind them of who they are in Christ. They are sanctified, they are called to be holy, they are like the rest of God's people who call on the name of Jesus. They have been set apart for a special purpose, to glorify God.

Paul is writing to remind these believers of who they are in Christ because the way they are living doesn't line up with who they are. Paul first visited Corinth around 50 AD and he spent a year and a half there, establishing the church, which consisted mostly of Gentiles. Paul most likely wrote 1 Corinthians some time between 52-55 AD.

Last year the 6pmer's looked at 1 Corinthians 1:1-6:11. I chose this break up because it matched the time allocated to preach the series. However, in preaching that section we didn't exactly follow the structure of the book. Different commentaries break up 1 Corinthians in different ways but probably the best commentary on 1 Corinthians (R.E. Ciampa and B.S. Rosner, The Pillar New Testament Commentary) breaks up the book as follows.

- I. Letter opening (1:1-9)
- II. True and False Wisdom and Corinthian Factionalism (1:10-4:17)
- III. “Flee Sexual Immorality” and “Glorify God with your Bodies” (4:18-7:40)
 - A. Negative Treatment: “Flee Sexual Immorality” (and Greed) (4:18-6:20)
 - B. Positive Treatment: “Glorify God with Your Bodies (7:1-40)
- IV. “Flee Idolatry” and “Glorify God” in Your Worship (8:1-14:40)
 - A. Negative Treatment: Flee Idolatry (Food offered to Idols) (8:1-11:1)
 - B. Positive Treatment: “Glorify God” in Your Worship (11:2-14:40)
- V. The Resurrection and Consummation (15:1-58)
- VI. Letter Closing (16:1-24)

Last time some of us looked at this book we got through section I, II and halfway through section III. So, in some ways we are picking the book back up in an awkward place, but I think we will survive. In fact this term we will also be a little messy in regard to the outline above. That’s the challenge of preaching enough each week but not too much.

In saying all of that I think the section we are looking at this term, 1 Corinthians 7:1-11:34 will be really interesting and helpful for us. We will think about sex in marriage, singleness, food sacrificed to idols, laying down our rights, fleeing idolatry, wearing hats in church and how we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. There’s a number of tricky bits and so there is lots of meat for us to chew on.

I think an overarching idea that works reasonably well for this section is the idea that we are ‘Free to Love’. When you trust in Jesus you are saved. You are free from following rules that make you right with God but that doesn’t mean you can live however you want. If you trust in Jesus and follow him, life is not about you—it’s about loving and serving others. It’s about glorifying God in whatever you do. I think some key verses for this section are 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1.

*³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God--³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. **11** ¹ Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*

I am praying that the term ahead helps us to be people who want to love and serve others, so that they may be saved. That we might glorify God in whatever we do. In Christ, Simon

Kick off: What do you think is the point of marriage?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-24

1. What stood out to you or what questions do you have from the reading?
2. From verse 1 what is Paul seeking to address in this section?
3. From verses 2-7 what is Paul's reply to this 'statement' in the letter?
4. What do you find surprising or makes you feel uncomfortable about Paul's statement?
5. In verses 8-9 what advice does Paul have for unmarried and widows?
6. From verses 10-11, what do the Corinthians appear to have been thinking about the value of marriage? How does Paul correct them?
7. What advice does Paul give to those who had become Christians but their spouse hadn't (v12-16)?
8. What key principle does Paul assert in v17 and 23-24 and illustrate practically in 18-22?

Think and Apply

9. Contrast what God's Word says about sex with what the world says about sex. What are the key differences in attitude?

10. If you are married what do you need to keep thinking about from the passage? If you are not married how has this passage informed or changed your thinking?

11. The world is always calling us to change our circumstances as the key to a better life. God calls instead to a change of character within the circumstances we're in. What will it mean for you to be content in your circumstances?

12. What is one thing you are taking away from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

Kickoff: What is the world's view of singleness?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

1. What stood out to you or what questions do you have from the reading?
2. Refer back to verses 7-9. It is likely in context that the 'gift' Paul is referring to is celibacy rather than singleness. In what way does he acknowledge that not all single people have that gift (verse 9)?
3. Remember Paul's call to contentment in v17 and 23-24. How does that hold together his teaching in this passage?
4. In saying he has "no command from the Lord" (v25), Paul is not saying his advice is of a 'lower level'. Rather he is distinguishing issues of freedom/wise choice (e.g. v26 "it is God...") from issues of mandatory obedience (e.g. v10 "Must not"). In this way, how does Paul here 'commend' but not 'command' the single life (v38)?
5. Paul refers to 'the present crisis' in v26 and spells out what this crisis is in verses 31 (Although this is debated—the present crisis could also be a famine or something like that). How is Paul applying our eternal hope in Christ to our attitudes and choices about relationships in this life?
6. What 'must' teaching does Paul give in v39 about who Christians should and shouldn't marry?

Think and Apply

7. Paul's greater concern in all his teaching about relationships is the relationship that rules them all—our relationship with the Lord. The phrase at the end of v35 is key: "undivided devotion to the Lord". How is this a radically different way to approach relationships?

8. How does our hope in Christ make contentment in any circumstance possible?

9. How should our hope in Christ also lead to other radical choices and actions in this world?

10. What's one thing you are taking away from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

3

Don't be a stumbling block

Kickoff: How do we normally understand freedom?

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

1. What stood out to you or what questions do you have from the reading?
2. In verses 1-3 what is the issue that Paul is now addressing and what appears to be the key to working through this issue?

Nearly all the food the Corinthians could buy in the marketplace would have been sacrificed to idols. How should they respond, as Christians who have converted from worshipping idols to living for Jesus? Paul will spell out part of the answer here and part in chapter 10.

3. What is Paul's point in verses 4-6?
4. What is the issue that Paul raises in verses 7-8?
5. What is the implication for the Corinthian Christians in verses 9-13?
6. From verse 13 how seriously does Paul take the idea of not being a stumbling block?

Think and apply

7. How is following Jesus different to the way that the world lives?

8. Taking Paul's principle in verse 13, discuss other examples where we might 'limit' or redirect our freedom for the sake of weaker brothers and sisters?

9. Read Philippians 2:5-8. What additional motivation do we have to give up our rights for the sake of others?

10. What is one thing you are taking away from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

4

All things to all people

Kickoff: Can you think of examples in the world around us, where people lay down their rights?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-14

1. Briefly sum up the message Paul had for the Corinthians in chapter 8 (see verse 9).
2. What is the basis of Paul's claim to authority? What rights can he claim?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:15-18

3. Paul was thankful for the gifts he received from the Philippians (Philippians 4:10-20). And he exhorts us to support those preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18). Why does he give up his rights from the Corinthians?

4. The Corinthians were into boasting about impressive speakers they followed (1 Corinthians 4:6-7; 2 Corinthians 11:12-15). How might this help us to understand the way Paul exercises his freedom in Corinth (see v12 also)?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

5. How does Paul exercise his freedom according to verse 19?

6. What is Paul prepared to be flexible on in his life? What according to verse 23, is he fixed in?

Think and Apply

7. Who, in your life, has been an example of selflessness? How?

8. What rights do you give up for the sake of the gospel and the good of others? What rights are you not willing to give up for the good of others?

9. "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some". What do you need to do to make that statement true for yourself?

10. What is one thing you are taking away from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

Kickoff: Do you think you are a disciplined person? Explain your answer.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

1. How does Paul approach his life as a Christian? What does he mean that he beats his body?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

2. What do verses 3 and 4 mean when they say the Israelites all drank from the same spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ?

3. What did the Israelites do with the freedom they were given (see verse 7 in particular)?

4. What warning and what encouragement do these verses have for us?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

5. Compare this section to chapter 6:16-18. What is common about how the Corinthians are to approach the two temptations? When we succumb to temptation who are we uniting ourselves with?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

6. How does Paul sum up our approach to what and when we eat and drink in verse 31?

7. Whose good should we be ultimately seeking by our actions (see v33 and 11:1)?

Think and Apply

8. Discuss how you try to discipline yourself to avoid sin and endure temptation.

9. What might you need to change about your eating and drinking or 'whatever' to ensure that you are doing everything for the glory of God?

10. How much of what you do is motivated by the desire to save many?

11. What is one thing you are taking away from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

Kickoff: Do you think women should wear hats in church? Explain your answer.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

1. What is one thing that stood out to you or what question do you have from the reading?
2. From verses 5 and 13-16, what seems to be happening during gathering of the Corinthians?

Cultural Context — It is hard to work out what is exactly going on in Corinth with this issue. There are a variety of different ideas. But the general idea is that a woman not covering her head conveyed a certain message. It conveyed that the woman was available to advances from men, it was drawing attention to herself. This would bring dishonour to her husband if she was married, it would suggest to the watching world that the church was a place of promiscuity. Paul doesn't want the church to be just like the culture around it, he wants it to be different. He wants them to remember who they are.

3. In correcting them, what principle about the relationships between men and women does Paul re-assert in verse 3?
4. If God is the head of Christ how does this help us to understand what is being communicated?
5. What attitude is Paul asking the women of the church to have in verses 4 to 10?
6. What do you think the reference to the angels in verse 10 is about?
7. In verses 11 and 12, who is Paul asking them to consider as they act?

8. Why do you think Paul would be so serious about this issue in verse 16?

Think and Apply

9. In what ways is Paul applying here in 11:2-16 the principles stated in 10:31-11:1?

10. Should women wear hats in church today? Explain your answer.

11. Are there ways we can dress and act as Christians today that imply we care little for God's order and authority?

12. What is one thing you are taking away from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

Kick off: Can you give an example of ceremony where there is a danger of us forgetting what it's actually about?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. What stood out to you from the passage or what questions do you have?
2. Compare 11:2 with 11:17. From verse 18 why is Paul so concerned?
3. From verses 20-22 why is their meal not fit to be called the Lord's Supper?
4. From verses 23-26 what should we be remembering when we celebrate the Lord's Supper?
5. From verses 27-34 what difference should this remembering make?
6. Verse 29 is a wordplay on 'recognising the body'. It is only when we recognise (remember properly) Jesus 'body broken for us that we will recognise (serve properly) 'the body', the church. What is Paul's rebuke to the Corinthians in terms of how they treat each other?

Think and Apply

7. Paul wants to get the Corinthians beyond the ritual to true remembering. What difference does it make to how we treat each other if we're always 'remembering Jesus' death?

8. In what ways can we build more remembrance of the cross into our lives?

9. What's one thing you are taking from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?