

06/20/10

Embracing the Challenges of Fatherhood – 1 Corinthians 7:17-40

- Earlier this month, we lost (humanly speaking) the man who was arguably one of, if not the greatest basketball coaches of all times...[scroll through 5 pics]
- His name was John Wooden...and he died on June 4th at the age of 99...in a way that the book of Psalms would describe as “yielding fruit in his old age...full of sap and very green” (Psalm 92:14).
- The story of his accomplishments is almost impossible to believe..
 - **Born October 14, 1910 in the town of Hall, Indiana** [not exactly the kind of place you would expect greatness to begin]
 - **After his family moved to the town of Martinsville when he was 14, he led the high school team to the state championship finals for three consecutive years, winning the tournament in 1927. He was a three time All-State selection.**
 - **After graduating in 1928, he attended Purdue University. He helped lead the Boilermakers to the 1932 National Championship.**
 - **He was named All-Big Ten and All-Midwestern (1930–32) while at Purdue, and he was the first player ever to be named a three-time consensus All-American.**
 - **After college, Wooden spent several years playing professionally while teaching and coaching in the high school ranks. During one 46-game stretch he made 134 consecutive free throws.**
 - **His high school coaching record over 11 years was 218–42.**
 - **In 1942, during World War II, he joined the Navy. He served for nearly three years and left the service as a lieutenant.**
 - **After World War II, Wooden coached at Indiana Teacher's College (now named Indiana State University) in Terre Haute, Indiana, and also served as athletic director, all while teaching and completing his master's degree in Education.**
 - **In 1947, Wooden's basketball team won the Indiana Collegiate Conference title and received an invitation to the National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball (NAIB) National Tournament in Kansas City. Wooden refused the invitation, citing the NAIB's policy banning African American players.**
 - **In 1948, he accepted the position as head coach of the UCLA Bruins, a position in which he served until 1975.**
 - **During his tenure with the Bruins, Wooden gained lasting fame with UCLA by winning 620 games in 27 seasons and 10 NCAA titles during his last 12 seasons, including seven in a row from 1967 to 1973.**
 - **His UCLA teams also had a record winning streak of 88 games and four perfect 30–0 seasons. They also won 38 straight games in NCAA Tournaments and a record 98 straight home game wins.**
 - **He was a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame as both a player (inducted in 1961) and as a coach (inducted in 1973). He was the first person ever enshrined in both categories. Only two others (Lenny Wilkens and Bill Sharman) have since been so honored.**
 - **His ten NCAA national championships in a 12-year period while at UCLA are unmatched by any other college basketball coach.**
- all of that is the stuff legend is made of...without question...but did you also know this about John Wooden...
 - **He was a Christian and his beliefs were more important to him than basketball, "I have always tried to make it clear that basketball is not the ultimate. It is of small**

importance in comparison to the total life we live. There is only one kind of life that truly wins, and that is the one that places faith in the hands of the Savior."

- **Wooden's faith strongly influenced his life. He read the Bible daily and regularly attended church. He said that he hopes his faith is apparent to others, "If I were ever prosecuted for my religion, I truly hope there would be enough evidence to convict me."**

- all of this is just an amazing story...one of the phrases that comes to mind here is..."a life well lived..."
- but there's one more piece of this story that draws it all together...because I assume many of us would have this question – who were some of Wooden's early influences who would have directed him on this path?...
 - history tells us that one of the primary answers to that question was John Wooden's father...
 - When John graduated from Centerton Grade School – that was an important occasion, because often young people did not go on to high school...
 - so gifts were often given to signify that accomplishment...
 - Joshua Wooden, John's father, gave his son the gift of wisdom that day...so he gave him a 3x5 card...on which he had written a poem on one side from Reverend Henry Dyke...

Four Things a Man Must Do If He Would Make His Life More True

**To think without confusion clearly,
To love his fellow man sincerely,
To act from honest motives purely,
To trust in God and heaven securely.**

On the other side, he wrote **7 principles to life:**

- **Be true to yourself.**
- **Make each day your masterpiece.**
- **Help others.**
- **Drink deeply from good books, especially the Bible.**
- **Make friendship a fine art.**
- **Build a shelter against a rainy day.** (meaning, cultivate your faith in God)
- **Pray for guidance and give thanks for your blessings every day.**

- his dad also gave him a 2 dollar bill (a lot of money in those days), and he said as long as you keep this 2 dollar bill you won't be broke.
- guess what they found in Coach Wooden's wallet the day he died...that same 2 dollar bill...
- there's no question about the fact that a father can have a powerful influence on his children...but the other side of that issue is – it's not always easy---that's why this morning we'd like to talk about **Embracing the Challenges of Fatherhood...**
- with that in mind, would you please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 7...[page 133 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...]
- this year we're doing a series entitled **Taking the Next Step...With Joy...**
- this is a verse by verse study of the book of 1 Corinthians...
- the last few weeks we've been in chapter 7...and I've mentioned several times that this is certainly one of the many cases in Scripture where understanding the context is critical to interpreting and applying the passage properly...

- it's important to keep these three ideas in mind:

1. These verses are Paul's response to questions the Corinthians had previously posed to him.

- **1 Corinthians 7:1 - Now concerning the things about which you wrote...**

- so we can't view what we're reading here as being comprehensive treatments of any of the subjects that are raised...they're just direct answers to specific questions...

2. Paul addresses several categories of persons in chapter 7, including:

a. Singles who may be dissatisfied with their condition, or who may be receiving pressure from others to marry, or to not marry.

b. Christians married to believers, but who may want out of the relationship with no biblical grounds.

c. Christians married to non-Christians who want to stay in the relationship, but the Christian wants out of the marriage anyway.

d. Christians married to non-Christians who do not want to stay in the relationship, but the Christian is trying to find a way to keep them from leaving.

- that particular piece is going to become a very important aspect of what we study this morning, and has huge implications to the subject of fatherhood...

3. These verses were penned under the cloud of the "pending distress," the upcoming persecution of the early church.

- **1 Corinthians 7:26 - I think then that this is good in view of the present distress...**

- by God's grace, we are not living under that same level of pending distress today in Christ's church...and that too would affect some of what we're reading today...

- now, with that in mind, let's read our text...**read 1 Corinthians 7:17-40...**

- obviously there are a lot of ideas running through this passage...many of them dealing with the warnings to single persons about what's really involved in being married...

- and remember that we said before we read---because of the particular context in which Paul was writing (this "pending distress" of the oncoming persecution of the early church) – Paul wanted to be sure that every person who chose to be married anyway clearly understood what they were getting themselves into...

- the point this morning is – every godly father has considered those warnings carefully, and decided that God would be most pleased if he embraced those challenges and with the help and enablement of His Savior...overcame them...

- so we're talking about **Embracing the Challenges of Fatherhood**...and with the time we have remaining, let's look for **3 characteristics of a father worthy of honor**.

I. Man of Contentment – 1 Corinthians 7:17-24.

- that's the big point of verses 17-24...

- there's several sub-themes...but the big picture is...learning the art of being content...

A. And that was the challenge in the Corinthian church (and every church)

- please think about those 4 categories we mentioned a moment ago...

a. Singles who may be dissatisfied with their condition, or who may be receiving pressure from others to marry, or to not marry.

b. Christians married to believers, but who may want out of the relationship with no biblical grounds.

- c. Christians married to non-Christians who want to stay in the relationship, but who want out of the marriage anyway.
- d. Christians married to non-Christians who do not want to stay in the relationship, but who are trying to find a way to keep them from leaving.
- what ties those 4 categories together is a potential lack of contentment...
- Paul says---you have to learn that art...and that point is so important, that he uses some rather outrageous examples to illustrate the significance of all of this...

B. Illustrations to prove the point.

1. Circumcision

- **1 Corinthians 7:18 - Was any man called *when he was already* circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.**

- now, you might read that and say – what?...and that’s exactly how God would want you to respond...
- sometimes we need a good shock to be sure we get the overall point...
- in the early church – there were some who believed Christians needed to be circumcised in order to enter heaven – in other words, they wanted NT Christians to still live under the law...
 - and so for males who had not been circumcised, these people were suggesting that adult males should go through that process as part of becoming a Christian...
- equally, if not more bizarre, was the position some in the church took that it was wrong for an infant to be circumcised because that was a Jewish custom—therefore when a person became a Christian—if he had been circumcised as baby—he needed to have that process surgically reversed when he trusted Christ...
 - now, I’m sure that’s more on that topic than anyone wanted or needed to hear on Father’s Day or any day – it’s amazing how frequently I find myself in some sort of controversy simply because I’m teaching the Word...
 - but Paul’s overall point is – be contented in the condition in which you find yourself...
- **1 Corinthians 7:20 - Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.**

2. Slavery

- now, if you say – these are 2 controversial illustrations...that’s the whole point...
- our time this morning doesn’t allow us to go into all the differences between slavery in Bible times and slavery in American History...they are 2 totally different topics...I do not personally believe Paul would have used “slavery in American history” as an illustration—but that’s an argument from silence...
 - but whether I’m right about that or not—the overall point is still the point...
- **1 Corinthians 7:24 - Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.**
- now, please don’t spend the rest of the service thinking about circumcision or slavery---because Paul was just using those illustrations to make a point about your marital state...
- if you’re going to make it in the Christian life, you have to learn the art of contentment...
- and that has application to every person in the room...it’s really important for everyone to avoid the “greener grass” syndrome...
- single persons believing all their problems would be solved if they were married---or if they were married to a particular person...

- or Christians married to Christians...daydreaming about what it would be like to not be married, or to be married to someone else...
- or Christians married to non-Christians who want to stay in the relationship – believing everything would be perfect if they were no longer married to that unbelieving person...
- or Christians married to non-Christians who want out of the relationship – trying to do everything in their power to make the unbelieving person stay...

- Paul gives us a principle here to help all of us – “let every man, in whatever state he is called – to there abide with God.”

- so to fathers here this morning, we would say – please work on developing the art of contentment...
 - or else there will always be something about your role, about your position, about your wife and your children that will be a source of irritation and disappointment to you...
 - and those characteristics can very easily become the excuse in your heart to not fulfill God’s calling for you in your family...
- wives and children – God has blessed some of you with husbands and fathers who are contented men...and some of you have not appreciated that characteristic as you should have...it’s called faithfulness, and dependability, and self-control...
- but some wives and children complain about that very cluster of characteristics...they call it being boring, or dull, or bland, or predictable...
 - that very well may be that your man has learned the art of putting up with you...in a godly and self-controlled way...

II. Man of Courage – 1 Corinthians 7:25-31

- this passage makes a fascinating statement about what is involved in marriage...
- and this is one of the things I love about the Bible, because it is so patently honest...
- **1 Corinthians 7:28 - But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.**
- that’s an incredible statement --- and remember we always interpret Scripture in light of Scripture...
 - Now marriage is a gift of God...it’s His design...it’s the first human institution, etc...that is why we never speak in a disparaging way about marriage, or our wives, or even mother-in-laws for that matter [cf. Pastor Goode’s [policy...]]
- but the text is still the text...if you get married (pending distress or not)---you will have trouble in this life...(men or women...)

A. Meaning – “trouble” – thlipsis – pressed together, or under pressure

Marriage presses two people together in the closest possible ways. The two become one, but they are still two personalities, two distinct people with their own likes and dislikes, their own characteristics, emotions, temperaments, and wills. Each partner has some degree of anger, selfishness, dishonesty, pride, forgetfulness, and thoughtlessness. That is true even of the best marriages...

Marriage involves conflicts, demands, hardships, sacrifices, and adjustments that singleness does not. Marriage is ordained of God, good, holy, and fulfilling; but it does not solve all problems. It brings more. (John MacArthur, Commentary on 1 Corinthians).

- now, what's the point for a purposes today...a godly father...

B. Willing to embrace the challenges the come with a marriage and family and solve them biblically.

1. Family values

- one of every godly father's greatest concerns is that his children will grow up and live for Christ as adults...
- but when you get a bunch of different people under the same roof who have different ideas, and different views, and different approaches...there's going to be "thlipsis"...there's going to be trouble...
- but a godly father tries to lead anyway...and he is willing to confront if necessary, anyway...
- and if you're that kind of a man – God bless you...you're not going to back down from the potential trouble that sometimes comes as a result of being involved in a family...
- and young people – if your dad confronts you from time to time about the way you talk, or the way you think, or the places you go, or the way you dress, etc...you should be thankful for a man who was willing to have the courage to face whatever trouble you bring to the equation...

2. H/W relationship.

- MacArthur was right when he said that pressing two people into the same home is going to be a great delight, and there will also be some fireworks...
- which is why some men will never make a commitment to be married, or keep a commitment to be married...
 - or if they are married, just ignore the problems because they don't have the courage to address them because there might be a few consequences along the way...

3. Raising Children

- the same is true when you throw a child or two in the mix...
- but my concern here is for the guy who won't "man-up" to the trouble...or for the young people who get mad when dad is trying to do his job of leading the family and solving problems biblically

4. Finances

- there's an area of trouble in many families...
- and if a dad is doing his job...he's worked with his wife to construct a budget...and he's leading his family to live within their means...
 - and for all of us, that involves getting really happy about the word "no"...
 - and that's not easy leadership to provide---and what's required is a man of courage...
 - and if you're that kind of man, God bless you...
 - and if God's given you that kind of man (either as a husband or a father), honor him today and every day...

III. Man of Concern – 1 Corinthians 7:32-40

- Paul says that another reason he would encourage them to remain single is...1

Corinthians 7:32 - But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;

A. Meaning – “concern” – merizo – divided

- this is the same word that is used in many places in Scripture to describe worry, or anxiety...
- **Matthew 6:34 - So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**
- that’s what worry is – being all divided up because of all your responsibilities and duties...
- and Paul says – you might want to think twice about being married and having children because there are a lot of competing priorities...

B. Uniqueness

- a godly man has said – I’ve thought about that – and I am willing to accept all the additional concerns that come with this position...
- [cf. adopting Karis – judge said – I spend most of my days dealing with people who do not want to accept responsibility for their actions – you are here because you are wanting me to legally place additional responsibilities on you...]

C. Challenge

- Balancing priorities – the whole point of the word – being divided...
- a godly man accepts that responsibility to try to juggle the various responsibilities that come with being a Christian husband and father...
 - a lot of times you don’t feel like you’re doing anything particularly well...
 - that drives us to the cross...
- let’s be praying for our fathers as they seek to do this well...