



Pray Together

Use the first few minutes of your time together to lead your group in a focused prayer time.

- **Praise:** Spend time praising God for who He is.
- **Repent:** Take a few moments to silently confess any sin that is lingering in your heart.
- **Ask:** Verbalize your needs and the needs of others to God.
- **Yield:** Surrender your will to God.

Read Together

The Apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to address many practical matters which were dividing the church in Corinth. Some issues resulted from divisive, unrighteous places (sexual immorality, shameful legal disputes, idolatry); others came from misguided pursuits of good things (sanctification, spiritual gifts, order in worship). Indeed, sanctification—a thoroughly good and righteous pursuit—would end up playing a major role in another issue that was dividing the church.

Of course, sanctification refers to a disciple's "set-apartness" or holiness in Christ. Christ-followers are made holy through Christ and are called to continually grow and strive after holiness by submitting to the Holy Spirit. But some of the Corinthians were suggesting that celibacy, singleness, marriage, and/or sexual abstinence within marriage were causes of holiness in the lives of believers. Paul is clear: no social status contributes anything toward a person's spiritual condition; Christ alone provides holiness.

However, marriage or singleness can afford unique opportunities for the sanctifying work of Christ to grow a disciple. Today we will examine how God might use both of these positions in our lives for His glory and our good.

Discuss Together

Use these questions to engage in an informative and impactful discussion.

- One theologian has defined sanctification in these terms: "Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives." Read the following Scriptural passages that relate to the doctrine of sanctification. Briefly discuss each.
 - Romans 6:11-14
 - Hebrews 12:5-11
 - John 14:21
 - Philippians 3:12-16
 - Romans 12:1-2
 - 1 John 3:4-10
 - Philippians 3:20-4:1
- Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 7 to clarify how Corinthian believers, in various life stages, might pursue Christ-likeness in a broken world. Read the following passages in 1 Corinthians 7. How would a first-century Corinthian audience be impacted by Paul's clarifying instructions? How do these passages speak to a 21st-century North American audience who is pursuing Christ-likeness?



- For the married (1 Corinthians 7:1-7):
 - For widowers and widows (1 Corinthians 7:8-9):
 - For Christian married couple (1 Corinthians 7:10-11):
 - For Christians married to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 7:12-16):
- How does marriage afford unique opportunities for the sanctifying work of Christ? How have you learned these lessons along the way? If you are married, identify one couple that you and your spouse could invest in to help them grow to Christian maturity.
 - In 1 Corinthians 7:25-40, Paul provides extended counsel to the unmarried and the widowed. “I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord” (7:35). How does singleness afford unique opportunities for the sanctifying work of Christ to grow you to Christian maturity? How have you learned these lessons along the way? Identify one single person who needs to be discipled to an undivided devotion to the Lord. How can you make an ongoing investment to help them grow to Christian maturity?

C.S. Lewis on Marriage

“People get from books the idea that if you have married the right person you may expect to go on ‘being in love’ forever. As a result, when they find they are not, they think this proves they have made a mistake and are entitled to a change-not realizing that, when they have changed, the glamour will presently go out of the new love just as it went out of the old one...”

—Mere Christianity

How I must obey Christ...

- Examine yourself. As a result of this study, identify a specific area in which you need to obey Christ this week.
- How do you specifically need to obey Christ in this area this week?
- How can Jesus redeem this area? How has He proven that in Scripture?
- Who will keep you accountable to this commitment this week?

Pray Together

Read and pray through 2 Corinthians 13:5.

