

May 6, 2018
"What Counts?"
1 Cor. 7:17-14

Review:

1. We have an assignment from God - a calling into which we are called vs 17
 - a. For the vast majority of us, God does not want us to change our current situation, he wants us to do the work he has for us to do in our current situation
2. Staying in our assignment is an exercise of faith
 - a. When we stay in our current assignment we are declaring that we believe the word of God when it tells us that He is the one who put us there.
3. The norm for all humanity is to seek self promotion.
 - a. The tendency for Christians is to use God as the validation for our selfish ambitions of self promotion.
4. The construct of this paragraph is built around the idea of remaining where you are.
 - a. Verse 17 "lead the life"
 - b. Verse 20 "remain in the life in which you were called"
 - c. Verse 24 " remain with God"
 - d. I said this was like the construction of a double decker bus, the framework makes two areas where life is happening -
 - i. Verses 18-19 address religious and ethnic life
 - ii. Verses 21-23 address socioeconomic and occupational life

What Counts?

1. What doesn't count
 - a. Circumcision
 - i. Circumcision represented for Jews their ethnic and religious identity and obed.
 1. Ethnically it distinguished them as descendants of Abraham
 2. Religiously it distinguished them from other descendants of Abraham - the Jews are those descendants of Abraham through Jacob, whom God had rescued out of Egypt and to whom he had given His Law and the land of Canaan
 3. It also became representative of adherence to that law
 - ii. Uncircumcision
 - i. This was synonymous with non Jewish
 1. So neither being a Jew or a non Jew counts for anything in Paul's mind
 - ii. Paul wants his audience to know that :
 1. Your external religious signes count for nothing
 - a. There is no work or dress or marking is any indication of devotion to God or adherence to his law
 2. Your ethnicity counts for nothing

- a. Apparently there were some who were trying to change their physical appearance in order to associate or disassociate with being Jewish
 - b. Today it works almost in reverse where we are encouraged to embrace and even boast in our skin color and our ancestry
 - i. Black is beautiful, brown is beautiful, white is beautiful, Paul is saying none of it matters
- c. Your social standing doesn't count
 - i. Supposedly in America we have no social distinctions. The Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal"
 - 1. Yet we know that throughout our history we have dealt with dealt with many social issues which, at their core, dealt with personhood and value
 - ii. Paul makes clear here that personhood and value were established by Jesus on the cross
- d. Your occupation doesn't count
 - i. Occupation is perhaps the primary way that we in america make social distinctions
 - ii. Again this issue is one of value - we realize our value and ascribe value to others based on what we perceive the importance of their work to be.
 - 1. The Psalmist understood this when he wrote "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness (Ps 84:10)" - the menial task of opening the door for the "important" people who come to your court would be wonderful
 - 2. Jesus in John 13 washes his disciples feet and said the son of man did not come to be served but to serve
 - iii. Your occupation counts for nothing - how you serve in your occupation counts for nothing - use your position
 - 1. It should be noted here that there are some occupation that are incompatible with Christian morality (stealing, sale or transport of illegal/stolen goods, human trafficking, prostitution, divination ect.) - a christian should not remain in such situations if they are saved while practicing them
 - 2. There are also legitimate occupations carried out in dishonesty - No christian should continue in dishonest business practices (cheating on taxes, swindling people into services they don't need ect.

Application

- 1. Your ethnicity does not define you
 - a. In Christ all people are truly one and in him all ethnic strife ceases
- 2. Your work does not define you

- a. Unlike our american culture, God does not place value based on our occupation and/or our social status
 - i. As God said to Samuel as he was looking for the next king among the sons of Jess “man looks at the outside, the Lord looks at the heart (1 Sam 16:7)”
 - b. Your value to God is your being bought with the blood of Jesus (vs 23)
3. Your ministry is your occupation
- a. Too often christians make the mistake of thinking ministry must be formal and distinct from the rest of life. With this lie satan has hamstrung the church of Christ
 - b. You spend $\frac{1}{3}$ of your day at your place of your employment and $\frac{1}{2}$ of you waking hours with the opportunity be Jesus to those you come in contact with at work
 - c. As christians we are all priests of God and as such we are to minister the grace of God to those around us
 - d. Don't make the mistake of thinking your occupation and your ministry are not the same thing!

Discussion questions

1. What types of things have you been guilty of “counting” as important to God? How were these things disobedient?
2. What are the things that you have allowed to define you? If Jesus were asked to define you, how might his answer differ from yours? Are there other places in scripture you might go to help answer this question?
3. How might attitude toward your occupation- regardless of whether you work inside the home or outside it- change if you really believed it was your assigned ministry from God?