

Lent Devotional March 14, 2020

Scripture

1 Corinthians 7:10-24

10 To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband 11 (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. 12 To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. 13 And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you. 16 Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife. 17 However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. 18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. 20 Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called. 21 Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever. 22 For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters. 24 In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God.

Devotional

The Rev. Diane Fonderlin '89, Mission (2018)

During our time in the overseas mission field, my husband, Tim, and I lived in some of the world's most impoverished nations. Over the years, we encountered countless challenges as we sought ways to work alongside people who needed decent shelter, good health care, enough food to eat, and educational opportunities.

To say that I never thought about just packing up and leaving would not be honest. Sometimes I would get so frustrated with bureaucratic red tape and corrupt government officials that I would mentally throw my hands in the air and say, "Lord, I'm ready to get out of here!"

But then I would spend a morning with Carl, the young man who served as my interpreter for seminary classes, and all those thoughts would melt away. Very bright and with a grasp of English that was so good, Carl would easily translate difficult theological concepts into explanations that Creole- and French-speaking students could understand. Knowing of Carl's desire to teach theology, I often thought how great it would be for him to study at a seminary in the U.S. or France. There he could flourish, get hired at a good theological school, and help equip future pastors.

But Carl has other ideas. Yes, he would like to take graduate courses at a good seminary, but his ultimate goal would always be to return to his homeland to teach theology. Because of all the limitations that people in his home country face, Carl wants to be a part of giving students the best schooling possible. This young man is truly content to "bloom where he was planted."

That principle is what Paul teaches the church at Corinth here in verses 10-24 of chapter 7. Many of those baby Christians were still holding on to their old way of life, and Paul's first letter to them is one of

good, practical counsel. He wants people to understand that they can be good Christians no matter their circumstances—and that they can bring about change by being obedient to the gospel.

These are words that still hold true for us—today!

Prayer

Lord of all creation, desire of our hearts, we thank you that we are able to come to you in the knowledge that our words reach loving ears. We are humbled by such caring. In this season of Lent, help us, we pray, to understand more fully your purposes for our lives. Strengthen us and guide us in the power of your great and Holy Spirit so that we may fulfill those purposes. For in doing so, our hope is that we may represent you in this world with all the graciousness, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, and love that Jesus Christ himself revealed when he walked this earth. O Lord, we truly want to be participants in your Kingdom-building! In the name of Christ, amen.