

# Youth Teaching Resources

January 21, 2018



## Epiphany: Big Questions (January 7-January 28)

Ephesians 3:1-12 – “The Mystery of the Ages”

1 Corinthians 6:1-20 – “What Is Best for Me?”

**1 Corinthians 7:25-40 (RCL 7:29-31) – “A Question of Matrimony”**

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 – “Are You Going to Eat That?”

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# A Question of Matrimony

## 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

### YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### PARENT PREP

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Social media has done a lot to shape the fabric of our society, and how relationships are defined is no different. Are you “Facebook official”? Did you tag them in your pictures? Who is your #wcw? Or you #mcm? Our students are engaged in all kinds of different relationships, but having a boyfriend or girlfriend is still a big deal. How do you deal with your student having a boyfriend or girlfriend? What role do you see playing in their life? How much do you try and shape that relationship? Through all of these questions remember that students are trying to figure out who they are, what type of person they will want to marry one day, and what it means to be committed to someone else. Help your students filter through all that goes in their relationships through these three criteria and see what happens to their relationships.

### TEACHING THE LESSON

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#### Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “Wedding Scenes” from *IMDb*. If you are unable to show the clip, share some of your favorite wedding stories, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Which of these scenes did you recognize? What made them memorable?
- 2) What are some of your favorite memories of going to weddings?
- 3) How many of you have thought about what your wedding will be like or look like?
- 4) What role does your faith have when you think about relationships?

## Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading 1 Corinthians 7:25-40. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) How do you read this passage knowing that Christ did not return during their lifetime? Do you believe Paul would have said the same things if he knew Christ was not going to return during their lifetimes?
- 2) Paul admits that he has no "word of the Lord" on this topic. Does this change how you read and interpret this passage?
- 3) Should Paul be giving advice to people who are married since he never married?
- 4) What was Paul's first concern for the people of the church? How does he say that should influence marriage?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) What questions must the people of Corinth have written to Paul about, knowing what he wrote back in response to them?
- 2) Who does Paul say has the authority in the marital relationship?
- 3) How would verse 36 change in its meaning if it were written to fathers or fiancées?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Is there still eschatological urgency?

## Transformation

Conclude your session by distributing cards and pens while having your students think about the couples that they know in their life that show them how to live life together. Instruct your students to write a "Thank You" card to this couple thanking them for being witness to how to live in relationship with each other. If there is time, ask the students to share who they chose and explain why they chose that couple.

Close with a prayer thanking God for the people that are in our lives that show us what it means to be in a loving relationship.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**The text**—Readers will not be surprised to note that we have expanded the lectionary text, which references only 1 Cor. 7:29-31. It is tempting to include the entire chapter in our study, but all 40 verses would be too much. Instead, we will focus on vv. 25-40, which echo some of the themes from vv. 1-24, but also focus more specifically on the place of marriage in a world with an uncertain future.

**Now to your questions**—Paul begins the chapter by saying “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote,” and quotes the first issue raised: apparently some were arguing that “It is well for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Cor. 7:1).

The questions Paul addressed included concerns about sex, marriage, and divorce, which he addressed in chapter 7; questions about permissible foods, which he tackled in chapters 8-11; and questions about spiritual gifts, which come up in chapter 12.

**Belonging**—Paul’s reference to husbands and wives having “authority” over their partner’s bodies is surprising in its mutuality, given that he suggests elsewhere that husbands have more authority. The notion of mutual possession recalls the beautiful line from the Song of Songs: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” (Song 6:3).

**Did Jesus expect to return soon?**—Jesus reportedly commented that “this generation will not pass away” until certain signs of the second coming were fulfilled (Mark 13:30 and parallels). Some of his followers – including Paul – must have taken this to mean that the world had only 20-40 years remaining. It is evident that the term “generation,” as Jesus used it, must have a broader meaning than we usually give it. Some suggest it refers to a historical period, such as the age of the church.

**Fathers, or fiancées?**—In translating v. 36, there are two key words. The first is *parthenos*, which usually means “virgin,” but it can also describe a young woman of marriageable age, or one who is betrothed. The Greek text speaks of how one behaves toward “his virgin,” without specifying the male concerned. The NRSV interprets *parthenos* as “fiancée,” and NIV11 similarly speaks of “the virgin he is engaged to.”

On the other hand, NASB95 adds “daughter” in italics to indicate that Paul was addressing fathers concerned about their daughters. NET, like KJV, renders the expression as “his virgin,” but with a clear understanding that it refers to one’s daughter, who might be in danger of passing the most marriageable age.

## Digging Deeper *continued*

The crux here is the interpretation of a second word in the following phrase. The term *huperakmos* usually means “past the prime of life” with regard to people, or “overripe” in the case of fruit. The most apparent reference is to a daughter who “past the bloom of youth” (NET) and in danger of aging out of the marriage market in a day when most marriages were arranged.

In contrast, some scholars argue that the word should be read with reference to the male in question, suggesting that here it could mean “past the crisis point” of passion. This leads to a position that Paul was addressing young men who were concerned about whether to go through with a marriage to their fiancée, and the NRSV translation “if his passions are strong, and so it has to be, let him marry as he wishes; it is no sin. Let them marry.”

## The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### Is there still eschatological urgency?

As noted in the lesson, the belief that Paul and many others of his generation shared – the sense of urgency that Christ would return in their time – turned out to be wrong. Christ did not return in their generation, and the world is still plugging along almost two millennia later.

Does this mean we can ignore Paul’s concern?

The answer is no – though Paul was wrong in his belief about the timing of Christ’s return, he was right in his teaching that believers must live in the present with the future in mind. We don’t want to be “so heavenly minded that we’re no earthly good,” as the old saying goes, but neither do we want to live as if there is no life beyond what we know on earth.

Whether we come to the end of our days because Christ returns to earth, or because we die and return to Christ, we all have limited time, and this should give to each of us a sense of eschatological urgency: life for the believer should be more than “business as usual” in the world.

This requires that we give careful thought to the decisions we make. As Richard B. Hays points out, “This chapter, perhaps more than any other in the New Testament, actively *invites* us into the process of rethinking and moral deliberation” (*First Corinthians*, Interpretation [Westminster John Knox Press, 2011], 133). The bottom line is that believers are called to give their first allegiance to God and their first priority to living the values of God’s kingdom.

Thinking for ourselves, we must ask whether we can do that best as a single person or married. The same issue figures into our choice of a career and our decisions about how we spend our money: do we devote all our resources to our own interests, or do we recognize that God’s blessings to us should also contribute to kingdom ministries or shared with others who have greater needs?

This chapter challenges us, as Ruthanna B. Hooke has written, “... to recognize that as Christians our lives too are framed by eschatological expectation, and this ought to shape our way of living in the world, just as Paul recommends that it should shape the Corinthian community ... Although we may not expect the return of Christ to happen in our lifetimes, as Paul did, as Christians we nonetheless do not simply resign ourselves to the givenness of the world, for we have planted within us a great hope that God’s kingdom will come on earth as in heaven. This means that we are a people who look to the future in trust and hope, confident that God is working God’s purposes out and that God’s realm is even now breaking into our world.

## The Hardest Question *continued*

Moreover, Paul's teaching reminds us that our expectation of God's inbreaking kingdom ought to have an urgency to it that puts all other aspects of our lives into their proper perspective" (*Feasting on the Word, Year B*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 1 of Accordance electronic ed. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008], paragraph 3267).

This "eschatological awareness," as Hooke puts it, imbues us with a sense of both freedom and urgency. We are free to live out our calling as we believe God is leading us, equipped with the broader perspective that the things of this life are impermanent: "the present form of this world is passing away" (v. 31). We also know that our personal time on earth is uncertain. We have a limited amount of time to do what God has called us to do.

With Hooke, "All the other aspects of our lives—relationships, possessions, or any and all other dealings with the world—must be ordered toward the mission of God. This radical devotion to God can be practiced only when we grasp the urgency of Paul's eschatological message and understand both the shortness of the time we have and the greatness of the hope to which God has called us" (paragraph 3269).