

***A FOCUSED LIFE***  
**1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1**

**(Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1)**

**INTRO:** Grady is a focused little guy and once he gets a destination in his mind, it is almost impossible to keep him from it. Over the past several weeks he has discovered the joy of climbing, so much so, that with his lack of fear, I think he will be free-climbing El Capitan in 20 years. I know this because he has begun climbing on anything that can be climbed on, especially the little shelf on our fireplace which I have discovered is properly named the hearth or hearth extension. It's pretty harmless fun, though there is potential for injury, so we try to distract him by picking him up and taking him across the room to some toy we know he likes. But some toy he likes does not hold a candle to scaling the heights of Nana and Papa's fireplace.

He inherited that focused trait from his mama who once she gets a plan (or problem, for that matter) in her mind you couldn't pull it out with a team of wild horses. His mama inherited it from HER mama who wrote the book on focus. It's what makes Kathy the best employee anyone could hire – she focuses on a task with unbreakable attention.

Kathy is that way with her dreams and schemes too. We moved into our house almost 16 years ago and for all of those years she has wanted to change our master bathroom. In 2005 the main problem was the color of the walls, though the shower was so small you had to step out of it just to change your mind. Over the years the fixtures, now thirty years old, have declined enough that it's really time for some upgrades. So we will be renovating our master bath over the next few months and it will reflect Kathy's careful research and be the fulfillment of what she envisions to be the perfect bathroom. This is a prime example of focus. Kathy is researching, showers, tile, marble, vanities, toilets, flooring, fixtures and other bathroom stuff ALL! THE! TIME!!!!

Me: Kathy, are you ready for our walk?

Kathy: Should we use white or biscuit for the fixtures?

Me: Kathy, eggs over easy or an omelet?

Kathy: How long is the tub?

And on and on. And her focus will make our master bath the best ever. Really!

Christ Followers have many distractions to pull our attention away from what really matters and we need a focused life to help us zero in on being the disciple Christ wants us to be. Paul points out here in 1 Corinthians 10 that a key to that focus is one another. We need to be about one another because being the Church in challenging times requires that we be responsible for one another.

He talks about this as he finally wraps up his discussion of eating food offered to idols that he began back in chapter 8. He will continue his discussion of one-anothering in the next chapter in a passage that we looked at over three months ago as I preached from Paul's stern words concerning the way the Corinthians had selfishly and irreverently defiled the celebration of the Lord's Supper. (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). He bluntly tells them there that I have no praise for you, 1 Corinthians 11:17. He begins the discussion with several things to focus on.

First . . .

**You can't be a pagan and a Christian at the same time**

- Picking up on what we discussed extensively last week, Paul tells us in verse 14 to *flee from idolatry*. Peterson puts it this way, *So, my very dear friends, when you see people reducing God to something they can use or control, get out of their company as fast as you can.* 1 Corinthians 10:14 (The Message). The Corinthian Christians were dabbling in the old ways and the best way to fall back into trouble is dance around the edges of the slippery slope of sin. The old adage is "Don't play with fire" and it still stands. In fact, avoidance is best – just say no.
- Last week I brought Paul's warning to be alert. The Corinthians thought a lot of themselves – to the point of arrogance and to the point of carelessness. He was concerned with the danger of them becoming unwitting partners with demons and the evil that comes with them as they carelessly partook in pagan meals in pagan temples. They were spiritual Titanics, fatally thinking they were unsinkable. Part of the issue was even as they ignoring the danger, they may have denied the idea the demons were present. This is a perennial issue, and we face the same danger. We too can become unwitting partners with demons.

Part of it is sheer carelessness; but all too often the danger is many Christians do not believe in demons. Let me tell you, Church, Satan and his minions, known as demons, are real and at work. They are not to be feared. They are defeated. But if you deny their existence, they will use you with reckless abandon. Don't be a spiritual Titanic – if you are Satan is likely to send an iceberg directly into your path.

- Several commentators suggest that the problem may have been that this issue of meat offered to idols was a test for Christians. Pagans, or even seekers who wanted to see what a Christian would do, might offer this food in an effort to tempt or to see a response. One solution would be to simply to not ask about what you're eating. After all, what you don't know won't hurt right? Like the time Kathy served lasagna made with venison to her mom and sisters who were visiting. Her one sister supposedly hated deer meat. (Tell story) She didn't really ask so we didn't really tell. But Paul is saying if you know and you know it's debatable for the one you are with or they are testing you, DON'T DO IT!
- Ignorance is not bliss. Just don't go there. The way out is for those who seek it, not for those who are looking for a way in. In William Barclay's words, *It was true in Corinth and it is true today, that the man who has handled the sacred things of Christ cannot soil his hands with mean and unworthy things.* The focused life looks outward to . . .

### **One life and one people**

- Paul has been referring more and more to the Lord's Supper as he gears up for his major discussion of the way the Corinthians had defiled Communion in chapter 11. Here he uses it as an example of the unity we have as we are focused together. Once again Peterson puts it into the most helpful and descriptive words, *And isn't it the same with the loaf of bread we break and eat? Don't we take into ourselves the body, the very life, of Christ? Because there is one loaf, our many-ness becomes one-ness—Christ doesn't become fragmented in us. Rather, we become unified in him. We don't reduce Christ to what we are; he raises us to what he is.* 1 Corinthians 10:16b-17 (The Message). Our one-ness in Christ is power in numbers. But more than that, it helps us in our one-anothering. So much so that we will more naturally put . . .

### **Others first**

- The end of our passage is central to Paul's message to the Corinthians and key to the focused life. Listen to it again, *For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.* 1 Corinthians 10:33b-11:1a. In Barclay's words, quite simply, *"A man has a duty to himself but a still greater duty to others."* Its as simple as this. Even if you are strong enough to participate in something that would cause others to stumble (again, the issue in Corinth that Paul has been discussing for quite some time, is food offered to idols), the plain truth is, as a follower of Jesus Christ who gave up his very life for our salvation, You are not your own, you have others to consider.
- With that in mind, and using F. B. Meyer's words, *"don't blunt, injure or destroy another's faith by what you do"* and then he goes on to say, *"Though our intelligence may give us wide liberty in regard to personal conduct, we must allow a check to be placed on it by Christian love."* We are not our own. The focused life means looking out for one another.
- Paul is pointing out that all things are lawful but not everything promotes spiritual life. So, our freedom is very much a real thing, but not at the expense of someone else's soul. For the Corinthians it was a question of knowledge and rights, for Paul it was a question of love and freedom. Knowledge and rights leads to pride because of selfishness. Love and freedom lead to edification and therefore the benefit of others so that they be saved. You have the freedom but is it best? Nope. But here's the point, in Barclay's words, *We can do all things to the glory of God only when we remember the duty we must discharge to our fellow men; and we will do that only when we remember that our Christian freedom is given to us not for our own sake but for the sake of others.*
- Because the focused life is . . .

**Conclusion: All for the glory of God.** I like Peterson's words, *He wants us—all or nothing. Do you think you can get off with anything less?* 1 Corinthians 10:22 (The Message). In every meal and act we must conduct ourselves so that praise and honor reflect on God and not on us. Paul ends with what could be construed as an arrogant suggestion, *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.* 1 Corinthians 11:1. But think about it. What example did the Corinth have? This being one of the first letters and likely before any of the Gospels,

Paul was the only example they had. Not only that, he was worthy to be emulated. When you want to know how to do something or be something, you look for a model. It makes perfect sense and it did for the Corinthians as well.

Now think about it: You might be the only Christ Follower people know. And from what we've seen of late, Christians have been poorly represented and have not been very good examples. We can't do anything about that. What has been done is done. But the damage is not irreparable. We can all be an example. This is what mean when I send us off with the words, "Go and be Jesus." When you are Jesus to someone, you are the best example ever. It takes focus, but we're all up for it. Let's go and be Jesus. Amen.