

7/18/10

What is God doing with the Corinthians? With Us?

Driving with a co-driver is always an experience...My wife and I regular banter when driving. While it relates to the classic male problem of not asking directions it is not precisely that I get lost regularly and need directions. In fact I rarely get lost when driving. One of the reasons by which I justify my, directional expertise is that I tend to think in the big picture. For example, when you go to a new town, if you can get a lay of the road system in the big picture, no matter, where you are precisely if you know what majors roads lay to the N, S, E, W in the city, then you can find your way if you get momentarily disoriented. Right?! Makes perfect sense? I love Google earth...is like the drug of choice for bp (Big Picture) addicts...because you can get the biggest picture available....global, then zoom down to national, then state then town, then streets....If I ever need to find my way to the pyramids of Egypt from Lafayette IN I'm in good shape....Now, As the loving leader of my home, I regularly try to instruct my wife in the big picture of driving...but she doesn't want to learn that...she just wants not Google earth but Google map directions... Go 3 mi S, turn left on 26, go 4.24 miles W on main and turn right....I say "what if there is construction honey, what if Google maps didn't haven't it just quite right?"...then she smiles and says..."that's when I call you, you are my big picture GPS" ! I ask "well what if I'm dead, then she says, I'll be rich and can hire somebody to tell me directions." No matter how much I say get the big picture, she likes step by step directions, She was thrilled one day to discover that the wise DOVE CHOCOLATE authority agrees with her...."Sometimes it is okay not to have the big picture." (Show slide)

While true...sometimes it is good to get the big picture..

How many of you are Big Picture kind of people? (purpose, plan, why)

How many of you are the step by step kind of people? (lists, precise, instructions)

Today we are going to look at the Big Picture of 1 Corinthians and ask "What is God doing with the Corinthians?"

Why is that necessary? Well Pastor Viars was gone all week on vacation and assignment me to preach without preaching on the next topic of in I Corinthians so I had to come up with something.

And also if you think about it some of us might be lost in the maze of 1 Corinthians

-Asking yourself is there any cohesion to the book.

-It seems like a compendium of answers to questions without a core

-kind of like Paul was ancient day version of ask.com.

-Paul has been answering many questions and dealing with many topics

.... And for you list and step by step people you may say great...when I'm in that situation, I know precisely what to do.

- When there is division in the church over personalities I will go to 1 Corinthians 1-4
- When there is immorality in the church I will go to 1 Corinthians 5

- When there is injustice in the church I will go to 1 Cor 6
- When I need to navigate the maze of marriage, divorce and remarriage and singleness I will go to 1 Cor 7
- When I need to think about by Christian liberty I will go to 1 Cor 8-9

I've got an encyclopedia of issues in 1 Corinthians!

Was Paul only functioning as an encyclopedia of random knowledge?

What's the answer to that?

Now, for you big picture people, you may be asking, "How is all of this cohesive....How does it fit together?"

What binds it all together?

What is God doing with all the instruction? What is the goal? What is the end game? What is the big picture?

So "What is God doing with the Corinthians?"

If we answer that question we also immediately have the answer to these question....

What is God doing in us when there is division in the church

What is God doing in us when there is immorality in the church

What is God doing in us when there is injustice in the church

What is God doing in us when there is misuse of liberty in the church....

Are you ready for the answer?

God is molding a distinct people from the nations for His very own to represent Him and rule over His everlasting Kingdom with His beloved Son.

How do I know that...Well throughout the maze of answers to questions and topics that Paul addresses there is always a glimpse of the big picture that Paul includes in order to ground his instruction so that the Corinthians and we might have the proper big picture orientation to guide us and help us persevere...

Let's look at some of these glimpses from 1 Corinthians (highlight and comment)

1:4 I thank my God always concerning **you** (CORINTHIANS) for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, **awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.** 9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

4: 8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, **you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.**

6:2 Or do you **not know that the saints will judge the world?** If the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to constitute* the smallest law courts? **3 Do you not know that we will judge angels?** How much more matters of this life?

6: 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous **will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, **will inherit the kingdom of God.**

9:23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a **fellow partaker of it.** 24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I **myself will not be disqualified.**

11:19 For there must also be factions among you, so that those **who are approved may become evident among you.**

11: 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until He comes.**

15:22-25 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24 then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot **inherit the kingdom** of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

God is molding a distinct people from the nations for His very own to represent Him and rule over His everlasting Kingdom with His beloved Son.

You may question... But Brent I wouldn't have gotten that from Corinthians?

And I would say, Paul is fully aware of the plan of God from the beginning of Creation....It hasn't changed. The Jews fit into that plan, the Gentiles fit into that plan...Paul instructions assume God's plan. **And that's why there are these shout outs to God's plan peppered throughout 1 corinthians.....** God is calling out a people for his very own possession and making them his very own so that one day people from every tribe and nation would populate God's eternal kingdom upon this earth and reign over his creation. Throughout our time this morning we will see how the instructions from 1 Corinthians fit with God's plan throughout recorded revelation.

So ..What is God doing with those "wicked" Corinthians

God is molding a distinct people from the nations for His very own to represent Him and rule over His everlasting Kingdom with His beloved Son.

So what is God doing with those "wicked" FBC folks?

God is molding a distinct people from the nations for His very own to represent Him and rule over His everlasting Kingdom with His beloved Son.

God is taking the Brent's of the world and the you's of this world, and training them in this life time for a future life in God's Kingdom.

That training consists of four conversions that God must make in His people for them to be fitting helpers for His Son in the Kingdom of God. Here is the first necessary conversion...

**1. God is molding a people absorbed with temporal values into those gripped with eternal values
(1 Cor 1-4)**

We are not going first to 1 Cor 1-4, let's go back for a moment to Acts 18:24-19:1 (Read)

After Paul left Corinth, who was his padawan...who was his successor, who was his protégé...Apollos...

What does the Acts text say about Apollos...Man this guy was the Ravi Zacharias of Ephesus

This guy was the John Piper of Corinth

He was "eloquent" "mighty in Scriptures" "fervent in spirit" "able to powerfully refute the Jews in Public"

Apollos was the successor of Paul—He was highly clever in speech and debate...most likely having been trained in the universities at the time, immersed in the art of flaming somebody with words.

Now, God brought the highly skilled man Apollos to Corinth after Paul left.

Now, while Paul was no dummy and could hold his own in a debate, Paul's physical condition when he first arrived at Corinth was anything but strong and bold.

Notice 1 Cor 2:1-3... the reason for this was because Paul had been beaten in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica and Athens and final got to come to Corinth and rest. He was weary.

Now, here is the perfect storm, What happens when you combine these elements 1) a culture that is enamoured with Greek Rhetoric and thinks that the wise person is the one who is skilled in speech, clever in communication, deadly in debate 2) a new pastor, Apollos, a godly man who is skilled in debate, and the subsequent fatherly figure who founded Corinth Paul.

What happens?—1 Cor 1-4.....division over wrong values, I'm of "appollos", "I'm of Paul". The Corinthian church valued the worlds wisdom that said the important significant people are those who have this skill set....

What corrective did Paul institute in Don't value us as communicative celebrities...Here is what to value....1 Cor 1-4: 4:1 Servants/Stewards...., v 6...

After Paul left Corinth, God brought into their lives the right set of explosive circumstances to begin exposing their values and then instructing them in the eternal values....

That's what he wants in his people....people who can make a distinction between temporal/secular worldly values and Godly, eternal values

That's what he wants in his people who will reign with His Son—Those kind of people who value what His son valued.

We can talk about this from numerous perspectives in terms of application

APPLICATION:

That's the first conversion God is making in His people for them to be fitting helpers for His Son in the Kingdom of God.

What's the second conversion...

2. **God is transforming a people immersed in injustices into those enthralled by God's righteousness. (1 Cor 5-11)**

Pastor Viars is preaching next week on 1 Cor 10.

At the end of the Christian liberties argument Paul draws upon the analogy of the OT saints

Look at 10:1...For I do not want you to be unaware brethren that our fathers...v 6...these things happen as examples for you....

With the immorality of the Corinthians in Chapter 5, the lawsuits in chapter 6, the abuses of Christian liberty in 7-9, we might conclude about the Corinthians this is déjà vu all over again.—only now with a Gentile flare and not a Jewish flare

These guys are no different than Israel....

With our immorality, lawsuits, abuses of Christian liberty, what might we conclude about ourselves? This is déjà vu all over again s....now with a 21st century flare instead of a 1st century flare

If this is the same pattern that all of God's people have to go through. What is God DOING?

If God is using the OT people as an example to the Corinthians, let's take a look at what God wanted from the OT folks...

Deut 4:5-9—wise nation, focused on God's justice and righteousness

Proverbs 1:3—God wanted a people characterized by wisdom—knowing righteousness, justice, equity,

Prov 2:9—God wanted a people characterized by wisdom—knowing righteousness, justice, equity,

Psalms 99:4—God wants those who represent Him.. HIS KING, HIS PEOPLE...to love justice, equity, righteousness..

So what is Paul doing when he instructs the Corinthians about their unrighteous immorality (chapter 5)

What is Paul doing when he instructs the Corinthians about their injustices in chapter 6

What is Paul doing when he instructs the Corinthians about the inequities in the Christian liberty issues..

After Paul left Corinth, God brought into their lives the right set of explosive circumstances to begin exposing their unrighteousness, their injustices, and their inequities... To make them into a people fit for His son's rule in the Kingdom

a. The training ground for the future reign is now (1 Cor 6:2-3, 1 Cor 9:24-27)

b. The divisions now are orchestrated by God for discrimination (1 Cor 11:19)

APPLICATION:

The third conversion God is making in His people consists of God changing...

3. God is changing a people enamored with themselves into those who thrive on loving others. (1 Cor 12-14)

Illustration: about kids being enriched in all good things and using it for themselves

What was happening after Paul left Corinthian?

Paul stated in 1 Cor 1:5 that the Corinthians had been enriched in all things...all spiritual gifts for the establishment of that congregation

The gist of 12-14 is that those gifts were being used to glorify the one gifted, not the Giver and certainly not being employed for the edification of others

The entire corrective that Paul gives is 1 Cor 13...the LOVE CHAPTER AND in verse 13:11 he essentially says...GROW UP. BEING enamored with yourself and your abilities given by God is childish....

11 When I was a child I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child, when I became a man, I did away with childish things.....Now abide faith hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.

After Paul left Corinth, God brought into the Corinthians' lives the right set of explosive circumstances to begin exposing their self-absorption and laid down the corrective—thrive on loving others...to make them into a people fit for His son's rule in the coming Kingdom

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Let me introduce to you Matthew Hull, a living breathing example of God's transformation. The pattern that God executed in the OT, the pattern that God was executing in the NT with his people and the pattern that God is executing now with His people is the same.

Matt came to get some help a little over a year ago

He had been

- absorbed with temporal values
- immersed in injustices
- enamored with himself

Now I would like you to hear from him about What God has done in his life

Conclusion...

Thank you Matt. Matt is participating in that transformation to be a part of that people who will represent God in the Kingdom....Are you? APPLICATION

There is a final conversion that God must execute in order to make a people to be fitting helpers for His Son in the Kingdom of God.

4. God will exchange a people in corruptible bodies for incorruptibility (1 Cor 15)

Thus, both externally in physical, resurrected body like Christ's and internally in character, tested and developed in this life time, God will make a people fit to reign with His Son over His Creation.

Did you know that was what God was doing in Corinthians?

Did you know that is what God is doing for His people now?

Now,

Who was the one gripped with eternal values of the Father

Who was enthralled by God's righteousness

Who thrived on loving others –Christ

Who is absorbed with temporal values

Who is immersed in injustices

Who is enamored with themselves (Corinthians, an us)

Christ is the one who not only met all God's requirements for being the heir of the Kingdom of God, but also brought about redemption for you and me so that God would have a special people for his very own possession.

Think about the Glory of this as well...As God molds a people like you and me who are absorbed with temporal values, immersed in injustices and enamored with ourselves...into a people like His Son. Is that not indicative of God's great grace, mercy, power...Then he is glorified in and through and by His praise offering people...That's the Big Picture.

According to Dove, "It may be okay to live without a "big picture" in mind". But I would say, When it comes to eternal matters, it is essential to know what God is doing among his people. When you see the finish line, then the race is finishible

When you see the target, then you have something to aim for.

When you see the master plan, then you know how to build now.