



**LC STUDY GUIDE: DONE IN SYNC WITH  
THE “WORK MATTERS” SERMON SERIES  
The Passage – I Corinthians 7:17-24  
For LCs meeting 1/12/14-1/26/14**

*These LC studies complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading and are not to be distributed to the entire group (it limits conversation). Not all of these questions need to be used in your LC meeting. Best to consider this a head-start and customize these for your LC study.*

**Study’s BIG Idea: God’s calling for each believer is unique and God is honored when we embrace our context, our identity, and our mission.**

## **I Corinthians 7:17-24**

**17** Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

**18** Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. **19** Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts. **20** Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

**21** Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. **22** For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord’s freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ’s slave. **23** You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. **24** Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

*New International Version (NIV, © 2011)*

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**O** – What command does Paul give three separate times in these 8 verses?  
*“Remain in the situation you are in when God called you” (vv. 17, 20, 24).*

**I** – The context of I Corinthians 7 includes illustrations of marriage, celibacy, circumcision, and slavery. Why do you think Paul includes such things in relation to his command to remain in the situation you were when God called you?  
*(Each of these situations could make a case that they needed to be changed upon conversion.)*

**I** – Thus, why does Paul state so adamantly that they should not change their status/situation?  
*(Theologian N.T. Wright says, “And Paul’s point is that social, cultural, ethnic and even*

*gender distinctions are as nothing compared to the new life in which, through the **gospel**, all Christians are brought together into one.”<sup>1</sup>*

**A** – What are some situations you changed when you became a Christian? What are some situations you did not change?

**A** – Think even deeper beyond circumstance and situation. What else has changed within you upon becoming a Christ-follower?

**O** – Interesting but awkward Biblical tidbit (LC Leaders, please use discretion). We generally think Paul is making an exaggerated point in verse 18 with circumcised men becoming uncircumcised. History tells us that some men would undergo a procedure to make it appear as so. Why would a circumcised Jewish man want this?

*(If you were a Jewish man leaving in a predominantly Gentile area you might consider such a procedure because in ancient society, being nude was common in places like public baths, exercise, and recreation. Again, Paul insists to not change such situations.)*

**I** – At first glance, we may think that Paul is endorsing slavery, but this is not the case. What is he really teaching believers in slavery?

*(In Jesus, you have all the changed situation and status you will ever need. Paul is not endorsing slavery; he is transcending the issue.)*

**A** – We may be tempted to use this reasoning to not change anything in our lives, but that would hinder our Christian growth and risk us being lazy in our mission. So what wisdom can be found in the search for balance between discipleship and (not) changing our situation?

**Key: O – Observation. I – Interpretation. A – Application**

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.

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<sup>1</sup> Wright, N.T. (2004). Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians (p. 86). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.