

September 21, 2014

Series Title: Living As the Cross-Centered Community

Message title: Challenging the Culture's Impact On Us (Part 1)

Passage: 1 Corinthians 4:17-6:8

Overview:

Having explained the cross of Christ as the crucial foundation of the church, Paul begins to deal with some very specific issues that have emerged in the life of the Corinthian church. Over the next four weeks we will look at the all-important subject of how the culture around us impacts life in the church. Churches are made up of sinful, broken people being transformed by God's grace, but these same people bring with them all the baggage of who they have become apart from Christ. These churches also exist in the middle of a culture whose foundation is radically other than the culture of God's Kingdom. Inevitably the church, as the place where gospel transformation is taking place, will have to deal with the collision of these cultures. In this week's lesson we will be looking at the church's role in confronting the impact of the world's culture and in providing vital accountability for each other.

Engaging with each other

1. Contrast the earliest TV programs you can recall with those that are broadcast today. What used to be shocking that we no longer blink an eye at?

Engaging with the Bible

1. In ch. 4:17-21 Paul's tone becomes much more stern. He is about to address some very difficult issues. What do you think is behind this change in approach?
2. In 5:1-2 Paul speaks directly about a man in the church who seems to be in a sexual relationship with his father's wife. Besides the act itself, what else is making Paul angry?
3. There were several ways this could be handled. The Jewish Law way would mean stoning him. The Roman way would be to turn him over to the civil courts. In 5:3-5 Paul describes how they should deal with it. Who is to be involved in dealing with this sin? What do you think it means that he is to be handed "over to Satan?" What is the goal of this kind of discipline?
4. In 5:6-8 Paul reminds them of the potential negative impact on the church if they do not deal with this by using the picture of yeast and of Christ as the Passover Lamb. What do you think his point is?
5. In 5:9-13 he further clarifies the scope of the church's responsibility of accountability. What distinction does Paul make? Why is this so important?
6. In 6:1-8 Paul addresses the issue of taking this matter to the public courts. Why does Paul so strongly oppose this path?
7. According to verse 7, what should the attitude be of believers toward each other and the community of faith?

Engaging with our lives

1. This kind of passage sounds very harsh to our modern ears. How would you describe what the church's role today should be in holding people accountable in their walks with Christ?
2. What are some things that would keep this process from devolving into judgmentalism and gossip?
3. Have you ever had someone speak words of warning to you? Did you experience this as helpful or demeaning? What would a helpful accountability look like?