



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



2084 Wilson Pike · Franklin, TN 37067 · 615.794.2665
Pastor Dennis Meaker: 615.794.2665 · djmeaker@gmail.com

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Wrong or Wronged?

⁷ In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? 1 Corinthians 6:7

Sometimes when I am reading the bible I come across a statement so bizarre that I feel like I've run into a wall while driving. 1 Corinthians 6:7 is one such statement. Why in the world would I rather be 'wronged' or 'defrauded' about anything? Does my faith require me to be a victim? Before we can understand what Paul is saying we need to put this statement in context.

First Corinthians is one of my favorite books of the bible. On one hand it is a window on a different time; a time when Christians were first working out what it meant to be Christian. On the other hand, it describes issues that have continued to arise in almost all congregations through the centuries. Chapter six deals with disputes between members of the church. Wherever people come together, there will be disputes, conflicts of interest, hurt. How is the Church to deal with such things?

In Corinth, members of the Church are taking one another to court. As in our society, access to civil courts was expensive. It was primarily the wealthy who turned to civil courts to resolve disputes and often civil suits were brought by the wealthy against those who were less affluent. As indicated in 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, those with wealth have been showing contempt for those who are slaves or who are not wealthy. The wealthy have been gorging themselves at the Lord's Supper before the whole community can gather, leaving the crumbs for those whose work or obligations as slaves kept them from arriving until the day's work is done. Similarly, it is likely that the wealthy in the congregation are the ones who are bringing civil suits against other members of the congregation. Also, as is true today, the wealthy had an advantage in civil courts over those with less wealth. In the Roman Empire, corruption was rampant and many of the judges were amenable to bribes.

Paul has two principal arguments against taking one another to Court. In Paul's eschatology, his view of what will happen at the end of time, the members of the Church will be a part of God's "court" judging the world. This theology was expressed in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament. (See, e.g. Daniel 7:22; Matthew 18:28; Revelation 3:21.) Paul mocks the idea that those who will judge the angels should turn to Roman civil courts to resolve their disputes. Paul's second argument draws on what he has said about wisdom in Chapter Three. Paul has mocked those who apparently argued that their wisdom was superior to others in the Church. He now taunts those same people by inquiring if there are no "wise" people in the congregation who can judge these everyday disputes.

In verse seven Paul comes to his major argument. If things have already devolved to the point that believers are taking one another to Court then the Church has failed to be the Church. The Church is not living as the Body of Christ. Rather than have believers bring civil suits against one another it is better that one suffer being wronged or defrauded. Paul viewed the Church, in part, as a family unit; a community. This community had been made into the very presence of Christ on Earth through the power of the Spirit. Bringing civil actions against one another destroyed that community. Thus, in Paul's view, it was better to suffer the wrong rather than act in a way to further tear the community apart.

Conflict in the Church must always be taken seriously. Conflict often involves deep seated feelings that, if not addressed, will continue to surface again and again. Learning to deal with that conflict is part of the discipline of learning to live in community as the Body of Christ.

As is true with much of scripture, 1 Corinthians 6:7 can be applied in another context; how we deal with those who are in need. Over the years I have been asked by people if I wasn't worried about being scammed by people asking for help who are not really in need of help. There are people who engage in small time fraud by going to Churches with a tale of woe and trying to obtain a handout of money. Such people might show up at multiple Churches on a Sunday morning seeking help and possibly "earn" a pretty good day's "wage." I remember one such person who showed up at West Nashville UMC from time to time seeking gas money for his family that he had left sitting in his car up on the interstate highway. Whenever someone volunteered to fill a gas can and take him back to his car he faded away.

I rarely gave out money and, when I did, it was money out of my own pocket. I also sought to probe exactly what was going on before I offered help. Still, I have no doubt that I was taken advantage of many times over the years. At some point I decided that, if I was going to seek to help, I would have to accept the inevitability that I would be scammed from time to time. The alternative was to allow my suspicion and cynicism to keep me from offering help to people truly in need of help. In that sense, it was better to be "wronged or defrauded."

The Poverty and Justice Bible

The Poverty & Justice Bible is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to www.Justicebible.org.

*Even when the wicked
are treated with mercy
in this land of justice,
they do wrong and are blind
to your glory, our LORD. Isaiah 26:10 CEV*

I was once privileged to have as my law partner Bill Leech. Bill was a former Attorney General of the State and was, in fact, the Attorney General who orchestrated the removal of Ray Blanton from office before he could pardon people who had bribed him for pardons. Bill was also a criminal defense attorney of some

renown. During his career he handled cases for many unpopular defendants, at times in the manner of Atticus Finch, the defense attorney in the book, *To Kill A Mocking Bird*. Bill once told me that the highest calling of an attorney was to defend another's freedom against the effort of the State to take away that freedom. Bill was under no illusions about the people he represented. However, like Isaiah, he believed that the Court must act with justice and mercy toward all defendants even when those defendants were deserving of punishment. If such people were not accorded justice, then no one could expect justice. The justice that God demands is always fair and always tempered by mercy.

³² The king called the first official back in and said, "You're an evil man! When you begged for mercy, I said you did not have to pay back a cent. ³³ Don't you think you should show pity to someone else, as I did to you?" Matt 18:32-33 CEV

Justice and mercy are interesting concepts and the focus of many scriptures. We all are interested in mercy if we are facing justice, but we are also inclined to want "justice" when we are the one wronged. The thing is, sometimes justice calls for mercy, even if we don't like it.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

January 18th: Come and See: Seeing is believing. My texts are 1 Samuel 3:1–20 and John 1:43–51.

January 25th: Values: What is it we value? To what extent should our beliefs affect what we value? My texts are Mark 1:14-20 and 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

Worship Leader's Schedule

January 18

Nancy Conway, **Liturgist**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**

Sam Richardson & Tommy Cotton, **Ushers**

January 25

Jason Aldred, **Liturgist**

Linda Robinson & Pat Moran, **Greeters**

Donnie & Renita Hartsock, **Ushers**

Announcements

Men: Don't forget to attend the men's meeting this **Saturday, January 17 at 8:30 AM**. All men are encouraged to attend.

Companions in Christ New Series on **John Wesley, "Revival,"** began Sunday, January 4. If you are looking to deepen your faith in 2015, join us for a six-week video journey following the life of John Wesley and exploring his defining characteristics of a Wesleyan Christian. Wesley's story is our story. It defines our faith and it challenges us to rediscover our spiritual passion.

The DVD features pastor Adam Hamilton guiding us through a Bible study tracing Wesley throughout England. It intends to deepen people's faith by calling them to a devout and holy life while defining what the Christian life looks like through his eyes.

January Birthdays

Cherry Klein, Dawn Stevens, Dennis Meaker, Ensley Mason, Rene Fetting, Judy Richardson, Linda

McGill, Jessica Moore

Happy Birthday to each of you!