

## **Dialegomai**

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1 Corinthians 7:1-11

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A frog goes into a bank and approaches the teller. He can see from her nameplate that her name is Patricia Whack. "Miss Whack, I'd like to get a \$30,000 loan to take a holiday." Patty looks at the frog in disbelief and asks his name. The frog says his name is Kermit Jagger, his dad is Mick Jagger, and that it's okay, he knows the bank manager. Patty explains that he will need to secure the loan with some collateral. The frog says, "Sure. I have this," and produces a tiny porcelain elephant, about an inch tall, bright pink and perfectly formed. Very confused, Patty explains that she'll have to consult with the bank manager and disappears into a back office. She finds the manager and says, "There's a frog called Kermit Jagger out there who claims to know you and wants to borrow \$30,000, and he wants to use this as collateral." She holds up the tiny pink elephant. "I mean, what in the world is this?" The bank manager looks back at her and says..."It's a knickknack, Patty Whack. Give the frog a loan. His old man's a Rolling Stone."

Chances are that your mind was racing ahead trying to figure out how all the things in that story would fit together. Why a frog? Is Patty's name significant? What's up with the little pink elephant? The answer came when we viewed the whole story, not just the little bits and pieces along the way. I want you to keep this in mind as we turn once again to Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church.

We've come to a point in our study where Paul spends several chapters answering some specific questions. For the most part, these questions surround a spiritual theme; which actions, which attitudes, which life style, which gift, which gender, or which way of worship is the more spiritual. These Christians almost seemed Pharisaical in their thinking; as if a person was more holy because they lived right, loved right, and served right. You have here a group of Christians who, in their pursuit of holiness, were missing the big picture. They were neglecting the rest of the story.

In chapter seven, Paul responds to a question about marriage. Apparently some people were thinking that it is more spiritual to be single or more spiritual to abstain from sex because these things can keep a person from focusing on God.

Now, Paul's answers need to be read in light of what he has been saying all along. He's been addressing their problem of division, of pride, of selfishness, and indifference. And keeping these things in mind will help us better understand why he says what he does. The whole thing will make sense if we read the entire story. (Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-11)

Apparently someone had filled their mind with the idea that one way of living was more spiritual than another. Somehow a few people got the idea that being single or abstaining from sex made a person more spiritual than someone who was married. In light of this, some people were practicing abstinence, which is right and proper for people who are not married. But to a married couple it is wrong. Others were divorcing. So you have two groups of people divided, and Paul seems to side with those who view their spiritual maturity in light of the whole story; those who think and reason, those who practice *dialegomai* (dee-a-lego-my).

Luke used the Greek word *dialegomai* several times in the book of acts, and each time it describes what Paul did in a synagogue in order to convince people that Jesus was the Christ. "Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths *reasoned* with them from the Scriptures."<sup>1</sup> (Acts 17:1-2) Using scripture Paul reasoned. He told it all. And most of the time it worked. Somehow the whole thing became clear when they saw the whole story.

Tell me, how could a person possibly claim to be like Christ when they don't act like Christ? In Corinth there were Christians who were trying to be better Christians by not acting like Christians. Do you see how absurd this is? Someone says they want to be more holy, so they divorce their spouse. Tell me how that makes sense? There is no way God would be pleased with someone who claims to be spiritually mature while disobeying His commands. They were not thinking with any ounce of *dialegomai*; any ounce of reason.

The damage here is that some Corinthian believers had taken one thing and made it the main thing. They jumped to uninformed or uneducated conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup>New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Ac 17:1-3). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

But the point is not which style of relationship is the best, but to commit themselves to being the best Christian they can in whatever relationship they happen to be in. This is what Paul had done in his life. He dedicated his life to serving God to the best of his ability regardless of if he was single or if he was married. And if these Christians had taken the time to think and reason, they would have come to the same conclusion as well.

I think it's important for you and me to exercise the same wisdom as we live out our lives. In our pursuit to be more like Christ we dare not neglect the teachings of Christ. In our times of prayer and discernment, we must keep the whole story in mind. God will not contradict Himself. He will not "speak to you" and tell you to do something that contradicts what He has already spoken through His word. There is a healthy consistency with our God. His values do not change. Although He may grant you and I different gifts, and although He may ask you to deal with a whole different set of circumstances than me, we both have the same goal in the end. We both are called to serve, honor, and obey our Lord the best that we can, regardless of the circumstances we may face.

I'll give these Corinthian Christians some credit. At least they were pursuing a more holy life. Their only problem was that they did not think and reason things through. Two wrongs do not make a right, I've often been told. However, I suspect you're probably struggling with how to become more faithful or more Christ-like in the midst of your present circumstances. My best advice to you is to keep your eyes focused on the whole story. Look at the big picture. Don't get hung up on the individual events that are happening in your life right now. Think and reason. Would God put you in a situation to destroy you? Would God cause things to happen that crush your spirit? We can answer with an emphatic *NO* only when we know the whole story; only when we know the heart of our God.