

## IMAGINE THAT THIS HAPPENS TO YOU . . .

Besides the house that you now live in, you own another house. There's a family in the church looking for accommodation, and you decided to rent it to them. A rental agreement was drawn up and signed by both of you, and six months later, you discover . . .

- (A) The tenant has damaged the main door as well as the toilet bowl in the master bedroom. The rental agreement has clearly spelt out the tenant's duty and liability in such situation, but they have not said anything to you nor taken any steps to repair/replace the damage.
- (B) The tenant has been late in rental payment for a few times, and last week moved out of the house without informing you. The rental agreement clearly stated a penalty fee payable if there's no advance notice (1 month) of rental termination. When confronted, the tenant refused to pay the penalty fee as well as the rental payment owed for the past 2 months.
- (C) The tenant has been spreading all sorts of malicious rumours about you and your family. Your reputation has been dragged through the mud! Other members in the church have asked you if some of the rumours circulating were true. Today after church, your daughter came crying to you because other church children have called her names as a result of some of the malicious rumours going around.
- (D) The husband has often been drunk, is a compulsive gambler and has physically beaten up his wife a number of times.
- (E) Both husband and wife are members of JI terrorist organisation, have sheltered Mas Selamat in your house and are planning to bomb the Singapore Flyer during CNY09.

What *would* you do? What *should* you do?

Does **1 Corinthians 6:1-11** have anything to say to you on how to handle the above situations?

Is this any other passage of Scripture we need to consult as well?

FIRST IMPRESSION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-8

Take some time to read these 8 verses and then write down in the space below what you believe is the teaching of this passage:

A CLOSER LOOK AT 1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-8

- *What exactly does the apostle here prohibit?  
What is prohibited here is believers taking fellow believers to court over the smallest matter, things that pertain to this life.*

*Note that believers are not here prohibited from seeking legal help to draft a will or business contract.*

*Note that believers are not here prohibited from going to court to seek justice or restrain evil-doers bent on harming us, when the other party is an unbeliever.*

*Note that believers are not here prohibited from defending themselves in court when they are being sued by unbelievers.*

- *Why is it prohibited?*
  - (A) *Your identity*  
*You are 'believers, saints, wise, brethren'. The ones you are asking to resolve minor issues for you are 'unrighteous, lest esteemed, unbelievers'. Surely, because you are who you are, you can resolve the issues among yourselves.*
  - (B) *Your destiny*  
*You will be judging the world and angels (vv2,3) in the future. If you are going to be judges in the High Court, are you now unable to handle small-claims tribunals?*

*Christians judging the world: Matthew 12:41-42, 19:27-28, Luke 22:29-30, 2 Timothy 2:12, Jude 14-15, Rev 3:21, Rev 20:4.*

(C) *Your Lord's honour*

*In taking the route of the courts, you bring shame (v5). The act is deemed utter failure (v7), never mind the verdict of the court.*

- *What should be done instead?*

*Bring the matter before fellow believers/the church (v1, 5). Let fellow believers/the church be the arbitration court.*

*Be like Christ (v7). This can mean either (i) Just swallow it and don't even raise the matter at all or (ii) The church has given the judgment, but it is not to your satisfaction/expectation. In this case, leave it on God's hand and wait for Him to act.*

*Overall principle: The teaching of Matthew 5:38-40, that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. The Christian would rather waive his rights than inflict an iota of damage upon the name of Christ. Hence, when we have dispute with another Christian, we should seek to resolve it out of honour to Christ, love for brothers in Christ and obedience to the Word of God. If between them they can't resolve it, then they should seek the church for help.*

*At the Cross, what looked like utter defeat was actually total victory. Did that victory come about by Jesus insisting on His rights, safeguarding His interests and demanding to have His way? What does the Cross teach but that sacrifice is the road to reconciliation and forgiveness. The disputes here arose primarily from pride, self-will, insistence of one's rights and defence of own interests.*

*Implied it also a call to practical commitment to put our lives in God's hands, to real discipleship, to trust His perfect will. Cf. 1 Peter 2:21-25.*

*V7 - the word 'wrong' refers to injustice in general and the word 'defraud' refers to wrongs with regard to property.*

- *How does verse 8 fit into this whole discussion?*

*William Barclay has this interesting description of the Greeks of those days, that they love litigation:*

*“The Greeks were naturally and characteristically a litigious people. The law-courts were in fact one of their chief amusements and entertainments . . . In a Greek city every man was more or less a lawyer and spent a very great part of his time either deciding or listening to law cases. The Greeks were in fact famous, or notorious, for their love of going to the law. Not unnaturally, certain of the Greeks had brought their litigious tendencies into the Christian church; and Paul was shocked.”*

*What this means is that once more, the world has invaded the church. The church is contaminated by the world. Like the issue of wisdom, so here: the believers were following the world in this matter.*

*And what is shocking here is that some believers were even bringing other believers to court to grab their goods and to take advantage of them! In other words, exploiting the legal systems for self-gain!!*

#### INTERPRETING 1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-8 WITH OTHER SCRIPTURES

- **Acts 25:10-12, 26:1-3**  
*We see Paul appealing to Caesar, which means he is asking for more court sessions! And he has no problems defending himself before King Agrippa.*
- **Acts 18:12-16**  
*When brought before the pro-consul at the judgment seat, Paul was ready to defend himself.*
- **Romans 13:1-7**  
*Calls us as believers to be subject to the governing authorities, to recognize their power and role. In other words, when we come face to face with crime, whether committed by believers or not, we have to call in the relevant authorities.*

*Overall, the 3 passages above provide a healthy balance in our interpretation of 1 Corinthians 6:1-11. We do not take a dismissive attitude towards the government and the legal system of the land. We use them, when needed, and when allowed by Scripture. But we do not abuse or misuse them, and we are guided by higher principles when dealing with believers.*

MESSAGE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

- V9-10:**     *The unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom.  
Unrighteous are fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites,  
thieves, covetous, drunkard, revilers and extortioners.  
The point is such people live in and continue in it (lifestyle).*
- V11:**       *Some of the Corinthian Christians belong there.  
But today, God has invaded their lives and changed them. He has washed  
them, sanctified them and justified them.*

*What is the link between verses 9-11 and verses 1-8?*

- *If you continue in these behaviour, then it is clear that you are not going to inherit God's kingdom. You are still an unbeliever!*
  
- *If indeed you were washed, sanctified and justified, then how could you continue such a lifestyle, one that is adopted by the world?*

Re-visit "IMAGINE THIS HAPPENS TO YOU". *In the light of what you have learnt above, how will you respond to each of the scenarios painted?*