



AN INTERPRETATION PROBLEM

Part 1: Reading assignment

Goal: to prepare for the next class session

Task: Read 1 Cor 8-10

Part 2: Written assignment

Goal: To help the student think through the various alternative interpretations of a specific passage/issue and determine which interpretation best fits the text.

Task:

While there may be many possible alternative interpretations of a passage, there is only one correct interpretation. In other words, a passage cannot both mean something and at the same time mean something else that is contradictory. While many Christians adopt a weak view of difficult passages, the serious student of the Word strives to find the correct interpretation. Sometimes, though, we aren't sure with 100% certainty. In such cases, we strive for the "best" interpretation and hold to it with a certain amount of tension and grace. By tension, we mean that each interpretation may have some difficulties—the less tension the better. By grace, we mean our attitude toward those who hold a different view than ourselves—the more grace toward others the better.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38 is just such a passage. There are three main possible interpretations or scenarios of this passage. The passage deals with the following:

1. A man and his daughter (virgin = unmarried daughter)
2. A man and his fiancé (virgin = his fiancé)
3. A man and his own singleness (virgin = his own virginity)

The assignment is to write out the meaning of the passage in your own words three times, using the three possible interpretations/scenarios. Use contemporary English and don't use the words "virgin" or "virginity." Then determine in your own mind which interpretation best fits what Paul is saying and causes the least amount of tension.