

I Corinthians - Lesson 07

I Cor. Chapter 7

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Memory verses for this week: *1 Pet 3:7 Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

Introduction: Last week in Chapter 6, Paul explained how we should not go to court against other Christians in the church, but should work out our problems without any outside influence. Harmony and the ability to get along one with another should be the trademark of Christians.

It is evident from the first verse that the Corinthians had inquired of Paul about marriage and the relationship of man and woman. He answers their question, but does not discuss the complete doctrine of marriage. This was an important question in the immoral city of Corinth, as it still is in our day.

I. Responsibilities of Marriage

1 Cor 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

1 Cor 7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

Paul's comments to the Corinthian's concerning marriage need to be understood in the proper context. He was dealing with the issue of marriage as it had been addressed directly to him. Paul did not mean that for a person to remain unmarried that it made them of a "higher status" than a married person, but he was commending those who had totally dedicated themselves to the ministry and the Lord's work.

In verse 2, he clearly states "let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" that they might avoid fornication. So the state of marriage is not something Paul was against. As a matter of fact, he told young Timothy that if you teach someone not to marry, it is a "doctrine of the devil."

1 Tim 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

1 Tim 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

1 Tim 4:3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

1 Tim 4:4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

There is absolutely nothing wrong in remaining single. It is good, if a person can abstain from fornication while remaining single. Some in the Church at Corinth thought that Christians should not get married, others were apparently teaching that every Christian must get married. Paul is not forbidding marriage, and he explains that marriage is desirable.

We know that some religious groups teach that marriage is the only true option for a Christian, and this is not of God. Paul was saying that if a man did remain unmarried, that it was good and honorable. If someone is single, we do not have a Christian responsibility to see that person become married so that they can be just like us. God may have a very special field of service for that individual, and marriage may not be good at this time. Many of the gospel musicians that travel are single, and I think it would be a difficult thing to travel continuously when you have a family. But Paul warns that if we can not contain, and must seek to satisfy the sexual appetite of the flesh, we should marry.

Cor 7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

1 Cor 7:4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

Being married has a lot of advantages, but it also brings a great deal of responsibility. One of our highest callings in this life is to raise our children properly and to be there for them as they grow and mature. When we marry, we agree to take on responsibility. Wife and husband are to render to each other due benevolence. We effectively become one flesh, and our needs are to be met one with another. Sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage is sinful and is not pleasing to God. Society today teaches that we can do whatever we want as long as consenting adults agree one with another. This is a lie from Satan, and we need to recognize this and honor God by obeying His commandments.

Eccl 4:9 Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

Eccl 4:10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

Eccl 4:11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

Eccl 4:12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

That threefold cord that is not quickly broken speaks of having Christ wrapped around our marriage. This is a sound and secure way to live. Marriage is a bulwark against committing fornication. It is clear that Paul is not forbidding marriage. In I Tim 4:3 which we earlier read, he accuses false prophets of doing that very thing.

1 Cor 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

1 Cor 7:6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

Verse 5 says it is permissible for husbands and wives to separate for a short period for time of prayer and fasting if they wish. These times should be kept relatively short so that we might not lose control and be led into sin. Paul says this is not by commandment, but by permission one with the other. Marriage partners are not to withhold respect and affection from each other. To do so is to defraud the other party. Now a temporary and mutual agreement is only to be done for religious and spiritual reasons as he mentions there in verse 5.

If this is not strictly observed, it will open the door for Satan's temptations.

NOTE: If Christian married couples would sit down together and study vs. 2-5, and accept it, it would solve many of their marriage problems.

1 Cor 7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

Paul expresses that he was perfectly satisfied in his unmarried state at this time, and wished others could also be this way. Before Paul was saved, he was given authority to bind Christians and to bring them back to Jerusalem by the Chief Priest. And Paul clearly states that he was a Pharisee and taught by Gamaliel, one of the great teachers of the law.

Phil 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

Phil 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

Phil 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Acts 22:3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

II. Instructions to the Unmarried and Widows

1 Cor 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

1 Cor 7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

Paul was single and happy, but he knew that not everyone had this gift. He tells the unmarried and widows that it would be good to remain single, and this is to be viewed in the light of vs. 7 and 9. He does not discuss divorced people in this passage. It would be better to marry, than to burn in lust.

1 Tim. 5:14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

Again Paul makes reference to his single condition in verse 8. The main point Paul is making is that we should learn to be content in our current state. So many who are single can not wait to be married, and many married seek to become single again. Marriage should be a serious, life-time commitment. So to rush into a decision without consulting God is a bad decision. He says in verse 9 that if they cannot contain, it would be better to marry than to burn. This does not have reference to eternal punishment as some have taught, but speaks of the burn of sexual desires and lust. Marriage is good and honorable, whereas lust is sinful and dishonoring to God.

Heb 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Mat 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

III. Instructions to the Married

1 Cor 7:10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

1 Cor 7:11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

There are many more verses of instruction to the married than to the widows and unmarried, pointing out the importance of marriage and what God expects of us when we make this commitment. These were not ideas formulated by Paul for a good marriage, for in verse 10, he says "I command, yet not I, but the Lord." Scripture was written as the Holy Spirit moved men to pen the very words God would have us to use for answers to life's difficult problems. It is clear that the wife should not depart from her husband.

It is permissible for her to stay away from him for a time that they might work out

their problems and then be reconciled. But they were neither to put one another away to marry another person. This may seem like difficult teaching to you in this day in which we live, but this is God's Word, and it needs to be honored and obeyed.

Evidently some of the Corinthian Christians thought that since they had been saved, they should separate themselves from an unsaved companion. Paul refutes this idea in this passage. The saved are not to depart from an unsaved companion. To do so, would not be the solution to the marriage problems. If conditions are so intolerable that separation or divorce is the last resort, the Christian is to remain single.

1 Cor 7:12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

1 Cor 7:13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

1 Cor 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

1 Cor 7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

1 Cor 7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

Paul addresses the situation where one member is lost and the other is saved. We are not to put away our wife or husband for this reason, as the saved person sanctifies the family. But if the lost person does depart, then he says in verse 15 to let them depart. We are not under bondage in such cases. But we should do all we can to reach that lost member for the Lord. If we follow the teachings of God, we will never marry a lost person. We are to be like minded and both be believers to be in God's Will.

If you look back in Ezra Chapter 9 and 10, you would find that in ancient Israel, if a Jew married a pagan, the union was unholy and he was ordered to put away his wife. His children were considered unholy. But Christ's blood gives the believer sanctification, and even the children are holy in the family. Now the faith of the saved member of the family does not save the other one, but it makes the family unit acceptable in God's sight. By living a righteous life, a saved woman or saved man can make a marked effect on the lost member, and that person will most likely find Christ after a period of time. It is important that we live like Christ, that we will be able to influence the lost member in the family.

The reference to children in verse 14 is this. Salvation does not annul the marriage, if so, this would make the children illegitimate. If the unbeliever departs, the Christian is not in bondage in such a case. Paul does not give permission to the believer to remarry. *Let her remain unmarried....* The

saved partner may be used to reach their mate.

1 Cor 7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

1 Cor 7:18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

1 Cor 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

1 Cor 7:20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

1 Cor 7:21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

1 Cor 7:22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

1 Cor 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

1 Cor 7:24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

In these early days of the church, much of the Jewish traditions and laws were constantly being brought up. To be a Jew, it was crucial that the male be circumcised. But verse 19 says that circumcision is nothing, that keeping the commandments of God is the important thing. Although we are made free by the blood of Jesus, the moment we become saved, we become a slave to Christ. Verse 23 says we are bought with a price, and we are no longer the servant of man, but rather to God.

A man who is a slave, should not think that when he is saved, he is now set free from slavery. If a slave is saved, he is not to be distressed because of his slavery. If he has the opportunity to become free, then he is to accept that opportunity. Remember what Paul said.

Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

1 Tim. 6:1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

Onesimus the runaway slave was converted, and then Paul sent him back to his master. (Philemon 10-18)

Matthew Henry had these comments.

“The rules of Christianity reach every condition; and in every state a man may live so as to be a credit to it. It is the duty of every Christian to be content with his lot, and to conduct himself in his rank and place as becomes a Christian. Our

comfort and happiness depend on what we are to Christ, not what we are in the world. No man should think to make his faith or religion, an argument to break through any natural or civil obligations. He should quietly and contentedly abide in the condition in which he is placed by Divine Providence.”

IV. Advice to Virgins

1 Cor 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

1 Cor 7:26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

This discussion on virgins come from the parental viewpoint. In "the present distress" Paul thought it best for the unmarried to remain single. The Church at Corinth was going through great distress, and it did not seem to be a good time to get married. This is not a rule for every situation every time.

1 Cor 7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

1 Cor 7:28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

1 Cor 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

1 Cor 7:30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

1 Cor 7:31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

1 Cor 7:32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

1 Cor 7:33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

1 Cor 7:34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

1 Cor 7:35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

What Paul has to say in these verses pertains both to men and women. In verse 26, Paul says “I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.” Referring to remaining single. The Corinthians were facing difficult times of oppression and persecution. In view of this, he said it would be good to not seek a wife at this time, but if you had one, you were not to leave her. And even today, we are to find a place

where we can be content and wait on the Lord. If you are married, be happy in that state. If you are single, be patient and wait on the Lord. Whatever is His will in your life is the best that you can ever hope for.

Paul was explaining that time was short, and the cause of Christ must come first. An unmarried person should have more time and desire to serve God, than if that person was married. This is the ideal, but many singles do not live that way. The married person may neglect pleasing the Lord, in order to please their mate. This does not have to be, if they give themselves to serve God together.

V. Instructions for Fathers of Virgins

1 Cor 7:36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

1 Cor 7:37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

1 Cor 7:38 So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

1 Cor 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

1 Cor 7:40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

Back in this day, we need to remember that the marriages were arranged by the parents. Even if the daughter did not love the man, she was to marry him according to the tradition. If the daughter was fully old enough to know her own mind, and there were attachments and commitments, the Father did not sin in letting her marry. Likewise, if the daughter had no desire to marry and there was no financial need for her to be married, it was okay for her to remain single.

The last verses address the situation when a member of the marriage dies. The man or woman is free to remarry, only in the Lord. Paul said in his estimation, he thought it would be better if she remained unmarried, but she was free to marry if that was her desire.

Today, marriages are considered to be temporary arrangements in modern thinking. If it doesn't work out, we can get a divorce, is exactly what many today think. This is totally wrong. In God's eyes, marriage is for a life time.

This means that it must be according to the Bible, and in the will of God. This should be true of all marriages. There is no place for trial marriages. Many people would be happier if they remained single. Many people are lonely, but loneliness is to be preferred over a bad marriage.

J. Vernon McGee in his commentary on I Corinthians had this to say.

“The important thing is to serve God, to put God first in your life. If a person is married, God should still be first in his life. Unfortunately, there are many Christian couples who are compatible—yet God does not have first place in their marriage. In deciding your marital status, the most important consideration is not what your Christian friends will say or how society will regard you. The question you need to ask yourself is: In what way can I put God first in my life?”

* Comments from E. L. Bynum added in June 2013.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.