

“Now that I’m a Christian, What about Marriage?”

1 Corinthians Chapter 7

1Cr 7:1 1) Concerning Sex in Marriage vs 1-9

Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

- “Concerning ...which you wrote” - The Corinthians sent a letter to Paul for clarification of particular matters.
- There were two very influential thoughts in the Greek culture.
 - First were the Epicureans. They believed that the pursuit of pleasure was man’s purpose. This group is dealt with in chapter 6 concerning the loose moral standard concerning sex and prostitutes.
 - Second were the Stoics. They believed that one should cut off the desires to live a pure life
- Paul is dealing with the Stoics in this chapter. There are pendulum swings that Christian walks through in many areas of living. In this issue the pendulum swung to a place where sexual immorality is such a problem that the thinking is that to be celibate was to be more pure or holy.
- Paul says “it is good for a man not to touch (have sex) with a woman.” He is saying. It is good if someone is devoted that way. There is nothing wrong with such devotion and especially a single man or woman sex is reserved for marriage.
- Paul is not saying that higher living is found in celibacy. It is good, but it is also good to be married and appropriate for a married couple to know each other in a sexual sense.

1Cr 7:2 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

- Paul is not doing an in depth teaching on marriage. He is dealing with one issue. Sex in marriage. This is not
- For a fuller teaching on marriage see Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19.
- Have his/her “OWN” - the Scriptures are dealing with immoralities (any sexual activity outside marriage)
- In the creation account in Genesis everything was created God would say “It is good.” But when man was created God said “It is NOT good” - “or man to be alone”. Man was created for an intimacy found in marriage.

1Cr 7:3 The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

1Cr 7:4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.

1Cr 7:5 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

1Cr 7:6 But this I say by way of concession, not of command.

- Having a sexual relationship in marriage, having that intimacy has benefits for building unity, love, purity and fidelity.
- This sexual relationship according to verse 3 is not something a man or woman gets to have. But it is an intimacy that a man or woman gets to give. This is one of a number of activities that nurtures love and intimacy. Communication, touching, sharing time and selfless attention are some other activities in marriage that build love an intimacy.
- Verse 3 NKJV says “render the AFFECTION due her.” Affection elevating sex higher than just an activity but relating it to a fondness and tender emotional aspect as well. Romance is to be part of the sexual relationship as well.
- The sexual relationship is never to be used as a means of control. Something withheld to manipulate each other. The word DEPRIVING is also translated as DEFRAUDED elsewhere. It is cheating a spouse to withhold affection.
- There is an acceptable devotion to abstain from sex in marriage for the purpose of focused prayer. But Paul makes it clear IT IS NOT A COMMAND. A concession is that it is optional.
- Satan has an interesting plan. He is out to convince man that Sex is acceptable outside of marriage and that it is to be abstained from in marriage.

1Cr 7:7 Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

1Cr 7:8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.

1Cr 7:9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.

- Paul honors singleness as well as the married relationship.
- Paul was likely married at one time. The scriptures do not mention his marriage or a wife. Most scholars agree that Paul was at one time married but his wife possibly died before or shortly after he became a Christian.
- Proof of his marriage:
 - Paul was esteemed by his people (**Philippians 3:4-6**) In his day it was expected that a man be married by 20 and that is was possibly due to sin that he was not.
 - **Acts 26:10** Paul is a voting member of the Sanhedrin. To be a member of the Sanhedrin a man must be married.
 - **Verse 8** - Paul speaks of the unmarried and the WIDOWS (widowers) which he included himself to this group.
- Paul considers singleness a gift from God as well as marriage a gift from God. One is not inferior to the other. It is by God's hand that a man/woman can live single. It is by God's hand that a man/woman can sustain marriage.
- Again Paul is not saying in verse 8 that Paul has it better. He is saying it is good if gifted that way to remain in the gifting.
 - 1 Timothy 4:1-3 Paul includes "forbidding of marriage" a "doctrine of demons"
- While this is not the reason to get married, marriage does offer the place of refuge from the constant sexual tension assaulted on you and I in our culture today.
- Yet, it needs to be understood that lust and sin must be dealt with before the Lord in repentance. Many who sought freedom from lust in marriage have found that marriage was not the answer but that the answer is found in a surrendered life to Jesus.

1Cr 7:10 **2) Concerning Divorce** vs 1-17

Divorce - Both Husband and Wife are Christians

But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband

1Cr 7:11 (but if she does leave, she **must** remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

- Paul moves on to another question posed to him. It is concerning Divorce.
- Paul is clear that this instruction is the Lord's mandate not his (Paul's) opinion which he will give in verse 12.
 - Paul is referring to the time when Jesus spoke about this **Matthew 19:3-12**
 - *"Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife **for any reason** at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH?' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. **What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.**"*
 - a. "For any reason" was the center a a debate in Jesus day.
Deuteronomy 24:1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some **uncleanness** in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house" The question was, WHAT DOES UNCLEANNESS MEAN?
 - b. Rabbi Shammai taught that uncleanness meant only sexual immorality.
 - c. Rabbi Hillel taught that uncleanness meant any indiscretion.
 - d. Jesus answered not by Shammai or Hillel but by Moses, by implying there should be no divorce, they have become one.

*They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" He said to them, "**Because of your hardness of***

heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. "And I say you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

- a. When pushed, Jesus said that Moses make it available because of the inappropriate heart of man.
- b. The Pharisees thought Moses commanded. Jesus clarified this by saying Moses permitted.
- c. It was not part of the original design.
- d. Jesus gives the first of **2 Biblical reasons for Divorce**. Paul will give the second in verse 15. Jesus said only in the case of **adultery** (sexual immorality)

The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it."

- a. The disciples knew immediately that this was a difficult teaching. It is still difficult today.
 - b. People today view many reasons, general unhappiness, conflict, abuse, addiction. These are not grounds for divorce. If one partner leaves due to any of these they might leave but there is no right to remarry.
 - c. The reality is that the offender in these cases is just selfish enough that if they do not repent of their sin that it usually will not be long before they commit an offence that is grounds for divorce.
 - d. Another reality is celibacy. Jesus was clear that it was for only those whom it was granted. Not everyone can accept it. Those given the disposition by Birth, by Man or by Calling.
- Divorce is not an option. The use of a strong "**MUST**" makes this perfectly clear. The Lord instructs that this couple should stay together. But if one leaves there are only two choices.
 - Remain unmarried
 - Reconcile
 - While divorce is a serious issue, an underlying issue is that the issue is formed out of a desire to pursue a higher spiritually by
 - Wouldn't we be able to serve the Lord better if we were not married?
 - Reasons may be:
 - not being bound by cares of this world
 - being free to go whenever and wherever
 - not answering to another human
 - answering to the Lord alone
 - The answer to the question is NO! because:
 - Marriage is a mechanism that tools us to be conformed into the image of Christ ("*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" **Ephesians 5:25**)
 - Marriage is an illustration of Christ's love for the church
 - Remain as you were called. God will use you just as you came to him.**1 Corinthians 7:18-24**

1Cr 7:12 **Divorce - One Spouse, Husband or Wife is NOT a Christians**

- Need to remember these Christians were not born into Christian homes. Generally they were converts. And there is a most likely that only one of the spouses converted.
- What do you do? Divorce the unbeliever now that all things are new? Wouldn't it be better to be married to a Christian?

But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.

1Cr 7:13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.

- Here the scenario is that one person in the marriage is a believer and the other is not.
- The unbelieving spouse "consents" (KJV - pleased) to live with the believer. Then there are no grounds for leaving or divorce.
- Believer is not allowed to pursue the divorce.

1Cr 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

- Paul gives a couple of reasons that the believing spouse should stay.
 - Unbelieving Spouse is sanctified (does not mean saved)
 - a. Sanctified (*GK hagiazo*) means to be set apart / set apart from profane things.
 - b. Holiness, Spiritual Awareness, temperate behavior can enter the home through the believing spouse. Many benefits of the Lord can come into a home because of the individual believing spouse
 - For the children. They would be holy.
 - a. There is a wonderful promise for believing parents that children are considered holy (*GK hagios*) different from sanctified in that a grace for salvation is applied.
 - b. This grace is for children until they are to a point of "accountability" or moral awareness. This is different for every child.
 - c. It is important for the believing spouse to stay so that at the "age of accountability" they have someone trusted and with the relationship to direct the older child into the things of God.

1Cr 7:15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

- Paul introduces the second of **2 Biblical Reasons for Divorce** to be granted. **Abandonment** from an unbelieving spouse.
- If the spouse doesn't want to reasonably live with a believer and leaves
 - "Reasonably" - Believers, it is also abandonment on your part to neglect an unbelieving spouse being so involved in church that you spend no time with them
- Paul declares that the believing spouse is "NO LONGER UNDER BONDAGE" saying that the marriage is considered void and that remarriage is acceptable.
- Been Divorced? You are in good company. **GOD WAS DIVORCED,**
- God considered His relationship with Israel as a marriage covenant.
- In looking at Israel's history we see Israel "*playing the harlot*" with other Gods and abandoning God. **Jeremiah 3:20 NKJV** "Surely, [as] a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the LORD."
- **Jeremiah 3:8** God divorced Israel "Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce"
- God's design of divorce is restoration. We see God waiting and accepting terms of restoration for Israel. **Jeremiah 3:12-15** "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the LORD; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I [am] merciful,' says the LORD; 'I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the LORD your God, And have scattered your charms To alien deities under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,' says the LORD. Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding."

1Cr 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

1Cr 7:17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

- The final reason for a believer staying with an unbeliever is that God may use the believing spouse to lead the unbeliever to repentance and salvation.
- It is by their chaste behavior not their ministry of nagging.
- 1 Peter 3:1-2 *"In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior."*
- Lastly, Paul's exhortation to remain in the same manner in which they found themselves (Married? Stay married. That is the context.)

1Cr 7:18 **3) Come as You Are / 2 Illustrations** vs 18-24

Was any man called *when he was already* circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.

1Cr 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters is* the keeping of the commandments of God.

1Cr 7:20 Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.

- The context is marriage but Paul uses two other issues of the day to illustrate his teaching.
- The first issue was circumcision. It is more spiritual to be circumcised or uncircumcised?
- In the Greek Roman culture was a very different time. In that culture the gymnasium or bath house was not only a popular recreation but it was the place where men would enjoy nudity, relaxation as well as conduct business. The Greeks and Romans also loathed circumcision. It became difficult for Jews and circumcised converts to conduct business.
- There was a surgical procedure to reverse circumcision. It is called epispasm.
- Another reason circumcised sought to become uncircumcised was the persecution that was upon the Jews. In 1 Maccabees 1:10-15 *"There sprang from these a sinful offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus, once a hostage at Rome. He became king in the year one hundred and thirty-seven of the kingdom of the Greeks. In those days there appeared in Israel men who were breakers of the law, and they seduced many people, saying: "Let us go and make an alliance with the Gentiles all around us; since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us." The proposal was agreeable; some from among the people promptly went to the king, and he authorized them to introduce the way of living of the Gentiles. Thereupon they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem according to the Gentile custom. They covered over the mark of their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to wrongdoing."*
- Paul is telling the Christians that it doesn't matter either way. Circumcised or uncircumcised. It matters nothing. There is not a spiritual benefit to being either. Circumcision was either acceptable or unacceptable by different groups. Which was better? Surely God wasn't us to fit in with the crowd we are ministering to.
- What matters is *"keeping the commandments"* Here we understand that if you were a drug dealer when Christ called you; you cannot stay the same. You need to repent of sins. But in areas of identity, race, status Paul is telling Christians not to seek a change.
- The lesson of the context is that circumcision / uncircumcision or married / unmarried are nothing critical in spiritual things. Keeping the commandments is the vital

ERROR:
Must be like
and accepted
by people to
preach the
gospel to
them.

1Cr 7:21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.

1Cr 7:22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

1Cr 7:23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

1Cr 7:24 Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that *condition* in which he was called.

ERROR:
Cannot serve
God properly
unless in full
time
ministry

- The second issue used as an illustration is being a slave.
- Paul is telling the slave that he is acceptable and useful to God as a slave. He doesn't have to become a freeman to be useful to God.
- Paul does tell the slave that if he has the opportunity to become free that he should take the opportunity.
- A slave can find his freedom in Christ.
- A freeman finds his devotion by becoming a Bondservant to Christ.
- *Ephesians 6:5-8 "Slaves, (EMPLOYEES) be obedient to those who are your masters (EMPLOYERS) according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."*
- *Philemon 1:15-16 "For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord."*
- Paul told slaves to be obedient to their masters in Christ. He also sent Onesimus back to his master to do right by him.
- Again the context being marriage. You do not have to strive to be something other than you are before you can serve God
- Again the excepting if you are in an activity that is sin. (Acts 19 the sorcerers repented and burned their books)

1Cr 7:25 **4) To Marry or Not to Marry** vs 25-38

Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.

- We should not consider these passages less inspired because Paul says this was his opinion not the Lord's command. The Lord simply didn't speak specifically this issue.
- Paul feels his opinion is trustworthy and in verse 40 Paul feels his opinion is from the Holy Spirit.

1Cr 7:26 I think then that this is good, in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

- Due the "present distress" implies there may have been a persecution that was coming against the Christians. You can imagine the cares and hardship that the married and married with children faced being persecuted.
- In contrast 3 years later he will write Ephesians that lifts up marriage. So he is not in any way teaching that Christians should not get married.

1Cr 7:27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

- We are to "*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith*" Hebrews 12:2 not seeking a wife or seeking singleness.

1Cr 7:28 But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

- Paul clearly states that it is not sin to marry.
- But that there will be different difficulties if you are married.

1Cr 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;

1Cr 7:30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess;

1Cr 7:31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

- Paul has been criticized as a false prophet for saying "the time is short" But...

- Matthew 24:44 Jesus also said to "Be ready"
- Psalm 39:5 "Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah."
- Things of this world are temporary. The "form of this world is passing away" Our source of security, happiness, is not in temporary things.
- Marriage between a man and a woman is not in heaven.
 - Matthew 22:30 The Sadducees questioned a situation of a widow who married 7 brothers, whose wife she will be. Jesus answered "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."
- So our source of happiness, and security should be found in the eternal. The Lord.
 - Paul is not saying in verse 29 for husbands to abandon their wives.

1Cr 7:32 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;

1Cr 7:33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,

1Cr 7:34 and *his interests are divided*. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

1Cr 7:35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and *to secure* undistracted devotion to the Lord.

- This is not difficult to see that the married will have more concerns to deal with than the one who is single.
- The concerns of the married are not sinful. In fact they are just as they ought to be. A husband should be concerned for his wife and children. Something is terribly wrong if he isn't. A wife should be concerned for her husband and children. Something is terribly wrong if she isn't.
- But concerning undistracted devotion to the Lord only the single can truly enjoy this. Unfortunately many singles do not look at their singleness as an opportunity for undistracted devotion but are distracted looking for marriage.
- Paul is not trying to put legalism on people. He is trying to nurture devotion to the Lord

Interesting Cultural Issue – Prearranged Marriages

1Cr 7:36 But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter*, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

- Verses 36-38 is speaking about arranged marriages. Parents making agreements as to who their children will marry. In most cases this is lost to our culture. And to their misfortune children do not seek or want their parent's advice at all.
- Again, the context is dealing with marriage and if it is spiritual, a father might forbid their child to become married because it isn't spiritual.
- The "man" in this verse is the father of a young woman. "Acting unbecomingly" is not any kind of improper behavior. It is denying a daughter to marry.

1Cr 7:37 But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin *daughter*, he will do well.

1Cr 7:38 So then both he who gives his own virgin *daughter* in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

- Paul is saying that the father needs to continue to decide "follow his heart"
- If giving daughter in marriage, it isn't sin. If the father decided not to allow marriage it too is fine. Paul, understanding "undistracted devotion" and the "present distress", it is better to remain single.
- It is not a good and bad but more of a better and best.

1Cr 7:39 **5) 'Til Death Do Us Part** vs 39-40

A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

1Cr 7:40 But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

- The marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman that is only broken upon death.
- Paul teaches that a widow is free to remarry or not. But as we have seen in light of the "present distress" and the standard of "undistracted devotion", Paul says a widow may be happier if she remains unmarried.
- But he also has written about widows in 1 Timothy 5:14 "*I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach*"
- The widow can marry whom she wishes, "ONLY IN THE LORD" This doesn't just mean marrying a Christian but marrying according to the will and desire of the Lord.

Paul has said of the single person

- It's good to be single
(verse 26)
- Single people will be spared married troubles
(verse 28)
- Single people have an opportunity for undistracted devotion to the Lord
(verse 32-35)
- Being married is good. Single is better
(verse 38)

"Is Marriage a Distraction?"

Paul honestly answers the question.

YES. It may be better to be single but the greatness of God is that:

- He loves and calls the single person
- He loves and calls the married person
- He loves and calls the divorced person
- He loves and calls the widowed person

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