

# DEVOTED OR DISTRVCTED

1 CORINTHIANS 7:10-40

## 8: **DEVOTED** or **DISTRVCTED** (1 Corinthians 7:10-40)

Christians are to be *DEVOTED* to the Lord.

But it seems that many of us are *DISTRVCTED*.

Today we are reminded that *no-one* and *no-thing* should distract us from the Lord Jesus having 1st place in our lives - including our spouse.

## beourguest

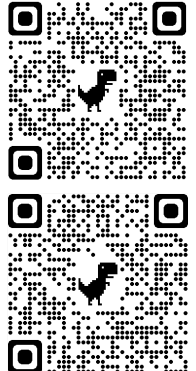
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## teachingnotes

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VISUAL NOTES

### Catch the Context

1. Paul is writing to Corinthian Christians to answer their questions about marriage, separation, divorce, and remarriage. Roman marriages were typically arranged, especially by prosperous parents, with little personal choice from the married couple.<sup>1</sup>
2. While the Jewish culture did not allow a woman to divorce her husband, the Roman culture did.<sup>2</sup>
3. Paul teaches what Jesus taught on this issue, but he also speaks to specifics that Jesus did not address.
4. Paul is most concerned about the Corinthians being **“devoted to the Lord without distraction.”** (1 Cor 7:35)

### Marriage is For Life

**1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (CSB)** To the married I give this command—not I, but the Lord—**a wife is not to leave her husband**. But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and **a husband is not to divorce his wife**.

This is not Paul's command, but a command from **the Lord** Jesus (Mat 5:31-32, Mk 10:11-12, Luke 16:18).

✓ This is a broad brush statement, that Christians who are married should stay in the marriage.

For those spouses who refuse to stay have 2 options:

1. Stay **unmarried** until your spouse dies (v39).
2. **Be reconciled** to your spouse.

Jesus taught that neither men nor women were allowed to leave their marriage partner and pursue another, as this would be **adultery**.

### Is There Ever An Exception?

**Matthew 5:31-32 (CSB)**

It was also said, *Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce*. But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit **adultery**. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits **adultery**.

The one exception for **divorce** that Jesus addresses is in the case of **sexual immorality** - that's the word **porneia** that Paul has used in 1 Cor 5:1, 6:13, 18, 7:2 - term for any kind of sexual activity *outside of marriage*. According to Jesus, one can't simply divorce your spouse for any reason and then marry someone else as this is **adultery**.

And since God still sees you as being married to your spouse, and you both become sexually intimate with other people, then you **BOTH commit adultery**.

<sup>1</sup> Ben Witherington III, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 170-171.

<sup>2</sup> Derek R. Brown and E. Tod Twiss, 1 Corinthians, ed. John D. Barry and Douglas Mangum, Lexham Research Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), 1 Co 7:17.

### **Matthew 19:9** (CSB)

I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits **adultery**."

In the case of **sexual immorality**, God allows for **divorce** & remarriage.

🔍 This should NEVER be the 1st option, as the 1st option is forgiveness & restoration.

Can a person who has biblical grounds for divorce be remarried?

• Some say **Jesus allows for divorce** in the case of adultery, **but not remarriage**.

❓ If God allows and recognizes the marriage as being over, then why couldn't they be remarried?

• Others say that Jesus implies that **remarriage is an option for the innocent spouse**.

### **Any other EXCEPTIONS?**

#### **1 Corinthians 7:12-14** (CSB)

But **I** (not the Lord) say to the rest: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce her husband. For the unbelieving husband is made holy by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy by the husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.

What does Paul mean by "**I not the Lord say**"? Paul is answering a question that Jesus didn't specifically address. Paul gives his best answer as led by the Holy Spirit.

A Christian can't leave their spouse simply because they don't follow Jesus.

If your non-Christian spouse **is willing** to stay with you, **you must not divorce him/her**.

The unbelieving spouse and children are **made holy by** the Christian spouse & parent.

- This doesn't mean that your spouse and children are saved because YOU are. The Scriptures are clear that individuals are saved by turning from sin and trusting in Jesus - not because of a relative's faith.
- The Christian's influence in the home will impact your household. God's blessings to the believer will overflow to the family and God's grace will be extended in a tangible way to the spouse and children!

### **What if the non-Christian spouse leaves?**

#### **1 Corinthians 7:15-16** (CSB)

But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. **A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases**. God has called you to live in peace. Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

What does "**not bound**" mean?

🔥 **Craig Keener** writes, "Paul's words recall the *exact* language for freedom to remarry in ancient divorce contracts" and his ancient audience would have understood his words that way.<sup>3</sup>

🔥 **John MacArthur** writes, "Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is assumed. Where divorce is permitted, remarriage is permitted."<sup>4</sup>

However, if the unbeliever is willing to stay in the boat, the Christian spouse should too - and be ready to throw the life-preserver to the non-Christian spouse who realizes they need help. God might use you to **save** them!

**If the unbeliever leaves**, the Christian is **not bound** to the marriage anymore and is free to remarry since **GOD SEES** the marriage as being over.

- Divorce is legitimate for **ADULTERY** - sexual immorality outside the marriage.
- Divorce is legitimate for **ABANDONMENT**, when one spouse leaves the other.
- It is likely that Jesus & Paul would allow divorce for physical **ABUSE**, as the spouse who is being UNFAITHFUL to his vows to protect and provide for her.

🔍 In any of these situations, the Lord's desire would be that both spouses REPENT of their sin toward Him and one another, and be restored to recreate a marriage that loves God and one another.

<sup>3</sup> Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 191.

<sup>4</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., 1 Corinthians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 167.

### **1 Corinthians 7:17-19** (CSB)

Let each one live his life in the situation the Lord assigned when God called him. This is what I command in all the churches. Was anyone already circumcised when he was called? He should not undo his circumcision. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? He should not get circumcised. Circumcision does not matter and uncircumcision does not matter. **Keeping God's commands is what matters.**

Gentiles didn't need to become good Jews by circumcision. Jews didn't have to reverse the outward sign of **circumcision**. God wants His people to be circumcised in their souls, given a new heart that cares about what matters most - **keeping God's commands** (Rm 2:27-29; Gal 5:6, 6:15; Col 2:11-14).

### **1 Corinthians 7:20-24** (CSB)

Let each of you remain in the situation in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Don't let it concern you. But if you can become free, by all means take the opportunity. For he who is called by the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise **he who is called as a free man is Christ's slave**. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of people. Brothers and sisters, each person is to remain with God in the situation in which he was called.

Paul's encourages Christians to 'bloom where you're planted' - to live for Jesus in whatever situation you find yourself in rather than putting all your effort into changing your status. We are to live as **Christ's slaves** because **we were bought at a price**.

- \* Note: Many "slaves" in the Roman Empire were treated more like indentured servants who were part of the family rather than the harshly treated slaves in the 1800s of America.

### **Should Christians Stop Getting Married?**

#### **1 Corinthians 7:25-31** (CSB)

Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I do give an opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is faithful. Because of the present distress, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. However, if you do get married, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But such people will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. This is what I mean, brothers and sisters: **The time is limited**, so from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they didn't own anything, and those who use the world as though they did not make full use of it. For this world in its current form is passing away.

🌟 **Craig Blomberg:** "All Christians should therefore sense an urgency to serving the Lord...[but] distractions of marriage may temper this urgency. So those who choose to wed must not become so preoccupied with their families that they can no longer effectively serve Christ."<sup>5</sup>

Paul was more concerned about eternal impact than earthly issues. **The time is limited** for Christians to share Christ with our dying culture.

- Believers who live in this world must experience moments to **weep, rejoice, buy and own** stuff, but shouldn't act like any of that is going to stick around forever because **this world in its current form is passing away**.

### **Has God Called YOU to Stay Unmarried?**

#### **1 Corinthians 7:32-34** (CSB)

I want you to be without concerns. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord—**how he may please the Lord**. But the married man is concerned about the things of the world—how he may please his wife—and **his interests are divided**. The unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But the married woman is concerned about the things of the world—how she may please her husband.

❓ Have you ever *asked God* if He wants you to remain unmarried so He can use you without distractions?

To remain unmarried (celibate) is NOT a curse. To remain unmarried doesn't lessen a person's purpose or value in any way. The apostle Paul remained unmarried from the time of this writing until his death. Paul is NOT commanding Christians not to marry, but letting them know this is an option, whereby a believer might be focused on **how to please the Lord**.

## Devoted without Distraction

**1 Corinthians 7:35** (CSB) I am saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is proper and so **that you may be devoted to the Lord without distraction.**

② **Are you devoted to the Lord Jesus?** Is your primary goal today...to please HIM or someone else?

🔍 LIST the people, events, and practices of your life that consume your time. How much of that demonstrates that you are DEVOTED to the Lord?

② If these lists are way out of balance, what should this tell you about whether you are DEVOTED or DISTRACTED?

## Keeping Jesus in the Middle of Our Relationships

**1 Corinthians 7:36-40** (CSB) If any man thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, if she is getting beyond the usual age for marriage, and he feels he should marry—he can do what he wants. He is not sinning; they can get married. But he who stands firm in his heart (who is under no compulsion, but has control over his own will) and has decided in his heart to keep her as his fiancée, will do well. So, then, he who marries his fiancée does well, but he who does not marry will do better. A wife is bound as long as her husband is living. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to anyone she wants—**only in the Lord.** But she is happier if she remains as she is, in my opinion. And I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

**Engaged** couples often struggle with **acting improperly toward** one another (i.e. staying sexually pure). If this is the case, the couple needs to get married quickly instead of living in sin. If the couple enjoys one another without sexual activity, then the relationship can continue without immediate marriage.

We have already seen that the Christian spouse who is abandoned is **free, not bound**, and therefore able to marry again. But the believer who is married to the non-believer who stays, is to **STAY** in the marriage until the spouse **dies**. After that, they may be remarried, but **only in the Lord.** *It is God's will for you to marry a follower of Jesus.*

## Feet to Faith

**Seek Jesus 1st.** Start your day in the Scriptures & prayer.

**Ditch Distractions.** Don't let the good things become God things.

## heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

\* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!

\* Or call our **deacons & wives:** Alan & Christy Androski (850-464-1428), Freddy & Joyce Howard (850-973-0047), Tim & Joni Hughey (850-464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (850-253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (850-464-6717), Jim & Derita Pinkard (850-464-6188), or Tom & Martha Waddail (850-973-0011).

## discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What challenged or encouraged you most from this teaching? Explain your answer. (You might scan these teaching notes to remind you of what stood out.)
2. **Read 1 Cor 7:35** (our theme verse from this passage). Take a few minutes and LIST the people, events, and practices of your life that consume your time. How much of that demonstrates that *you are DEVOTED to the Lord?* *What are some unnecessary things that DISTRACT you?*
3. Today's teaching covered a lot about marriage, divorce, remarriage, and celibacy. What questions or answers did that prompt for you?
4. What advice would you give to an unmarried Christian who wants to marry someone who doesn't follow Jesus? Give some practical ways that a Christian couple (dating, married, or engaged) can keep Jesus in the middle of their relationship?
5. What other questions has this teaching or discussion prompted for us to talk about?
6. **Share prayer needs and pray for one another.** Pray for our Supreme Court decision on Roe v Wade. Pray for Christians in Ukraine and Russia to carry the message of Jesus with them wherever they go. PRAY that God will greatly use us to impact people who need to follow Jesus. PRAY as we search for our next Student Pastor.