

1 Cor 7 pt 2

Good evening and thank you for joining us. We're continuing our verse-by-verse study in 1 Corinthians, so would you please turn to 1 Corinthians 7? Last week we saw what the Bible had to say about sex and marriage. And you'll remember, sex is so important in a marriage, that Satan will do whatever he can to get people to have sex before marriage, and prevent sex within a marriage.

Tonight we'll finish our study of chapter 7, and we'll pick up in verse 10 and we'll see right off the bat how Paul addresses married people who find themselves in four different situations...

Verse 10 speaks to folks who are married. Verse 11 to married people who are separated. Verses 12-14 are directed to the believer who is married to an unbeliever. And verse 15 is to a believer in Christ whose spouse refuses to stay married and departs the relationship.

The title of tonight's message is STAYING COMMITTED

Let's pray.

You've likely heard the statistics, that the number of Christian marriages that end in divorce is the same as non-Christians-50%

But unfortunately, that often-used statistic is absolutely littered with flaws.

But no matter what the statistics may say, we know God's stance on divorce. **Malachi 2:16 "For the LORD God of Israel says**

That He hates divorce,

For it covers one's garment with violence,"

Says the LORD of hosts.

**“Therefore take heed to your spirit,
That you do not deal treacherously.”**

Every Christian marriage that dissolves into a divorce doesn't just hurt those involved. No it hinders the witness of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

How can we tell the world that Jesus has the power to reconcile people to God and to each other, if married Christians don't have the wherewithal to stick together?

Christians speak of forgiveness, but when it comes to marriage some are reluctant to practice it!

Christians speak of power through the HS, but sometimes aren't willing to allow the Spirit room to change the hearts in the marriage!

Point being, for a Christian marriage to not only work, but to thrive, each spouse must be obedient to the Lord.

10 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. God's blueprint for marriage is one man and one woman in a lifelong relationship. Neither spouse is to abandon their marriage!

11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. Here the word translated “depart” means “to put room between.” Paul, in addressing a marriage where both partners are Christians, says that they should not – indeed, cannot – break up

the marriage. In fact, if one were to depart from their spouse, they must either remain unmarried or be reconciled.

I've done a fair amount of premarital counseling. And one of the questions that is asked of the couple is 'does God ever allow divorce'? The couple's responses are often incorrect!

The word of God tells us there are only 2 specific grounds under which God will recognize a divorce. We'll talk about one in a few minutes in verse 15, which is when a believing partner is deserted by an unbelieving spouse. The only other approved reason by God to divorce is when there is sexual immorality **Matthew 19:3**

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made^[fn] them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'^[fn] 5 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'?^[fn] 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality,^[fn] and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

10 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

When Jesus' disciples understood how binding the marriage covenant was, and how it could not be broken in the sight of God for just any reason, they responded with "better then not to marry!"

They understood Jesus perfectly, and so should more people today, before they enter into the covenant of marriage.

So this brings up the tough question-what about abuse in marriage? If a man is beating his wife physically, or harming the children, or gambling away all the money, does the Bible say that the spouse has to endure it?

Not at all! Let's read verse 11 again **11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife**

A Christian couple may in fact separate for reasons that do not justify a Biblical divorce. God recognizes, without at all encouraging, that a spouse might depart, or separate in certain circumstances, but they cannot consider themselves divorced, with the right to remarry, because their marriage had not split up for reasons that justify a Biblical divorce.

So even if a spouse is separated, the partners are expected to honor their marriage vows even in their separation, because as far as God is concerned, they are still married. They may live as separate, but cannot live as though single.

It reminds me of a famous quote by Ruth Graham, wife of Evangelist Billy. Ruth was asked if she ever considered divorce? She answered, "Divorce? No. Murder? Yes."

In the darkest days of WW2, Churchill reminded the British people, "Wars are not won by evacuation." And neither are good

marriages. A temporary separation may be necessary, but either remain alone or be reconciled.

12 But to the rest (Pause here-Paul is shifting the focus from the group previously addressed - couples where both partners were Christians, he's speaking to a new group) **I, not the Lord, say:** Pause again- Does this mean Paul is just giving his opinion here? Not at all. When he says not the Lord, he simply means that Jesus did not teach on this specific point, as Jesus had in the previous situation in Matthew 19.

...19 If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. If you're a believer in Jesus, and you're married to an unbeliever - just because your unbelieving spouse rejects the Lord, doesn't give the believing spouse the right to reject them.

Will this marriage be difficult? Yes. Problematic? I'm sure. Lonely at times? Absolutely

This is why the Bible says in **2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**

SHOW PIC 2 Corinthians 6 uses the picture of a yoke, a harness that connected two oxen behind a plow. A farmer's yoke was constructed to force the animals to work together. The yoke choked the animal who pulled ahead, and pinched the one who lagged behind. The yoke made them work together. **CLOSE PIC**

That's why, it was easier on the animals to yoke two of the same breed. Now if you mixed a donkey with an ox, you insure friction

and frustration. Why? Because different species have different natures that pull apart and fight each other.

And in the very same way a believer and unbeliever are like separate species – they have different natures. A believer has been born of God - alive to the things of the Spirit. Whereas the unbeliever - even if he's a nice guy or she's a sweet girl, they are still dead in their sin and unaware of the HS.

Put these two in the same yoke – be it a business relationship, roommate situation, a serious dating relationship or, worse yet a marriage, and you can be sure it'll produce conflict and frustration.

At first, the two parties might work well together, but over time they'll inevitably move in separate directions. They'll pinch or choke the other. The yoke causes pain.

There's an old Puritan proverb that puts it, "If you're a child of God, and you marry a child of the devil you're going to have problems with your father-in-law."

Christian marriage is until death do you part, whether it makes you happy all the time or not. Any two people are going to have their share of differences, so why ignore the main difference - the very thing that makes you tick?

Think about it-if you're a Christian married to a non-Christian, you have a huge treasure you can't share or relate to with your spouse. There'll be a disconnect. Why invite that kind of conflict from the start?

Yet here was the phenomena that had happened in both Corinth, and in all the other first century cities... Many of the initial Christians were married before they heard the Gospel - some couples for many years. Someone preached the good news, a

spouse embraced Christ - he or she went from darkness to light - their life radically changed - but not their spouse.

All of a sudden this unbeliever realizes they're married to a different person - because they are! This happened to many a marriage in the first century, and of course still happens today.

So the believing spouse is NOT to divorce their unbelieving spouse. They're to stick it out. Why?

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. It's important to understand what Paul is NOT saying... He's not teaching that the unbelieving spouse, or their kids, get to heaven on the believer's faith. That's not how salvation works. No one gets saved by association.

Here it says the unbeliever is sanctified by the believer. The words "sanctified" and "holy" are from the same Greek word "hagios," which means "to set apart."

The word **sanctified** speaks of position and opportunity. Paul is saying when a believer remains married to an unbeliever, the light of God continues to shine! The attitude and conduct of the believing spouse is a constant sermon to the family!!

Now the focus turns to the only other valid reason that God grants permission to divorce.

So we know that God allows divorce for sexual immorality, and the 2nd reason God allows divorce is here in verse 15...

15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. 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? The second biblical justification for divorce is desertion. If you're deserted by a spouse because of your faith in Jesus, then you have the prerogative to move on and remarry in the will of God.

But again, be careful how you define "desertion." A husband who ignores his wife during football season, and spends too much time with his remote control is guilty of insensitivity, but not desertion.

A wife who spends too much money at the mall may be disrespectful, but she hasn't departed the marriage.

If an unbelieving spouse departs the marriage; then God doesn't require the believer to stay celibate the rest of his or her life. The believer can move on and remarry.

I want to mention one more scenario. Paul doesn't bring it up in our text, but it's relevant to this topic. What if you did divorce your spouse on unbiblical grounds? In looking back on it now you realize you didn't have a biblical basis, and the choice you made was a sin. You've now remarried, and according to Jesus you and your spouse have committed adultery. What now?

Here's what you do... you treat divorce and adultery like every other sin. You don't ignore it, or hide it, or rename it - you confess it, and ask God to forgive you. If you do, the Bible promises, **1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Jesus will forgive you fully and freely. Old things pass away, all things become new.

Remember the woman caught in adultery - in the very act. Jesus refused to bring condemnation. He loved her, and forgave her, and offered her a new start. "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more."

And that's what Jesus says to each of us!

Remember, the people of Jerusalem had gone to bed with idols - with false gods. They'd committed spiritual adultery. But look how

God refers to Israel in **Jeremiah 31:21**, **"Set up signposts,**

Make landmarks;

Set your heart toward the highway,

The way in which you went.

Turn back, O virgin of Israel,

Turn back to these your cities.

God refers to His pardoned people as "O virgin of Israel." How's that for cleansing one's sin? God gave His people a brand new start!

Perhaps you're in a marriage that you've always wondered if it was right. A black cloud hangs overhead. Today, you can make it right. Despite the events that launched your marriage, dedicate it now to Him. Let God sanctify it, and make it a testimony of His grace.

If you're married, stay married. If you're separated, seek to reconcile. If you're married to an unbeliever pray for their soul and be a good spouse... And if you're free to remarry either through your former spouse's actions, or God's forgiveness, then make wise decisions going forward. Let's all view marriage in ways that glorify God.

Divorce is not the unpardonable sin. Neither is abortion. Or homosexuality. Or lying, or pride.

No the unpardonable sin is to blaspheme the HS, which is to deny the lordship of Jesus because the bible says the HS always lives

to make testify of Jesus. No matter what sin we're guilty of, when we ask forgiveness we are forgiven and we are free.

John 8:36 "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

So is it more pleasing to God to be married or single?

17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. No matter where you're at in life- married, single, divorced, widowed, remarried, whatever - God can work in your life and use your life for His great purposes.

Some folks mistakenly think they'll be able to serve the Lord better when their circumstances change. But the Bible instructs us to be faithful now, where ever we are at.

18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Paul is saying that if you were circumcised when you became a Christian, fine. If you were not circumcised when you became a Christian, that's fine too. Those things don't matter. What matters is being obedient to the Lord no matter our circumstances.

20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. This is so freeing!! I don't have to try and be the next Billy graham, or Chuck Smith! I'm called to be me!

Verses 21-24 give an example of this principle from the practice of slavery

21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. A slave can please God

as a slave. He shouldn't live his life thinking, "I can't do anything for God now, but I sure could serve God if I was a free man." The slave could and should serve God despite his circumstances

Of course if the slave had the opportunity to be free, he should take advantage of it.

22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. In the ways that truly count, no person is more free than a Christian. No bondage is as terrible as that of sin, from which Christ frees the believer.

As Christians we are free from sin, but in the spiritual sense we're called to be slaves for Christ **Romans 6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**

23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. This is true not only in regard to literal slavery, but spiritually also. We're never to put ourselves under the inappropriate control or influence of others.

24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called. So whether married or single, circumcised, or uncircumcised, slave or free. We can seek God's best and be used by Him right where we are.

Now Paul is about to close this section by using examples to let the Christians know that marriage isn't bad in the sight of God, and neither is singleness.

25 Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. Offering his opinion, Paul reiterates that the

being single allows a person to be singularly committed to the kingdom.

26-28

26 I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is: 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.

Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you. Apparently, there was some kind of local persecution or problem in the city of Corinth, and because of this distress, Paul says there are definite advantages to remaining single.

What was the advantage of remaining single? We can easily imagine how in a time of persecution or great crisis, how much more of a burden a wife or a family can be for someone committed to standing strong for the Lord. We may say, “Torture me, and I will never renounce Jesus.” But what if we were threatened with the rape of our wife or the torture of our children?

Paul never implies that being married or single is more spiritual than the other, but clearly this was a big question for the Corinthian Christians.

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,

The Bible tells us we’re to be ready, and to regard the time as short, not only because Jesus can return at any time, but also because living in expectation of the rapture cultivates a more obedient, on-fire walk with Jesus Christ. Now this doesn’t mean we neglect our spouses, not at all—look at Ephesians 5. It does mean that we ought to live with an eye to eternity.

30-31

30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, 31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away. Whether a person is single or married, we should live with an attitude of detachment from the world. This is not our home! And because it's not our home we shouldn't let it control us, but we should control our use of it

32-35

32 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. 33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. 34 There is^[fn] a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. 35 And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction. Here, Paul simply recognizes that when a person doesn't have family responsibilities, they are more "free" to serve God. This was the main reason Paul considered the unmarried state preferable for himself.

Again, Paul's reason for explaining these things is not to forbid marriage, but to put it into an eternal perspective. He isn't putting a restriction on anyone; he merely shares from his own heart and experience.

For Paul, the most important thing in life was not romantic love, but pleasing God. For him, he could please God better as single, but another may please God better as married.

Though Paul insists he does not want his teaching here to be regarded as a noose around anyone's neck, this has happened in the church. Roman Catholics insist on celibacy for all of their clergy, even if they are not gifted to be so.

But on the flip side, many Protestant groups will not ordain or trust the single person.

For Paul, being unmarried meant fewer distractions in serving God. Tragically, to many modern single Christians, singleness is a terrible distraction! Instead, they should regard their present unmarried state (whether it is temporary or permanent) as a special opportunity to please God.

After talking about the freedom found in being single, in his day of arranged marriages, Paul goes on to talk to fathers about their unmarried daughters.

Remember in this ancient culture, a young person's parents had the primary responsibility for arranging their marriage. So based on what Paul has already taught, should a Christian father recommend celibacy to his child?

36 But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry. The man Paul refers to is the father of a young woman of marrying age. The father is instructed that it's not a sin to allow their daughter to get married.

37 Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin,[fn] does well.
38 So then he who gives her[fn] in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better. For Paul, the choice between married and single was not the choice between good

and bad, but between better and best. And for Paul, in light of the present circumstances, he regarded singleness as best.

39 A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. A widow has the right to remarry. But a Christian widow, like any Christian, is really only free to remarry another Christian (only in the Lord).

40 But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God. At the same time, Paul believes such a widow is happier if she remains as she is – that is, if she remains single. Essentially, Paul wants the widow not to remarry without carefully considering that God might be calling her to celibacy.