

We continue in our series:



“Proverbs for the Marriage and Family,” and once again, see this picture. This picture of a family. Looks nice. A dad, a mom...children...hand-in-hand...beautiful scene. But, it’s not always like that in real life, is it? Sometimes families become broken. Broken by divorce...and the family is no longer the same.

Today’s message is about “Divorce, Remarriage and Singleness.” We know God never intended for there to be divorce. But there is and we must deal with it. So, let’s talk about it. How does it begin...

**Proverbs 26:20**

***<sup>20</sup> For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.***

Divorce can happen for many reasons...but, it’s usually symptomatic of the breakdown of the glue of a marriage which is communication. Being TOGETHER...on the same page...locked in together. The #1 reason a marriage ends is not because of adultery or finances or you pick it...oh, that may be part of it...no the #1 reason marriages end is because of a cold heart...a heart that gives up...that freezes over...that says, “I’m done.” They can’t take it anymore. This can happen because of unfaithfulness, incessant lies, mistrust, etc. etc. But at the end of the day, they’re just tired of trying and tired of battling. So, they put up a “No Fishing Sign”...



on their heart. They say, "You're not allowed here anymore." And that's the beginning of the end. The fire goes out...the quarreling ceases...because they're done. And this is why Solomon wrote:

**Proverbs 17:1**

<sup>1</sup> Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting<sup>[a]</sup> with strife.

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**Proverbs 11:29**

<sup>29</sup> Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.

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What did Jesus say about divorce? What is the reason He gave for divorce? Adultery...let's see now Jesus' words on the subject of divorce...

**Matthew 19:1-10**

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. <sup>2</sup> And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. <sup>3</sup> And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" <sup>4</sup> He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup> and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." <sup>7</sup> They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" <sup>8</sup> He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. <sup>9</sup> And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

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Are you living in adultery today? You say, "No, not that I know of." Jesus had some other things to say about adultery in His "Sermon on the Mount:"

**Matthew 5:31-32**

<sup>31</sup> "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

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Are you living in adultery today? Listen carefully, if you didn't divorce according to Scriptural guidelines, then you are. It's that simple. As followers of Jesus, we live by the Word of God. Jesus said, "Except for adultery, don't divorce." But is that the only reason a person may divorce? No, it

isn't. There's another place in Scripture that gives us one other exception...and it's this passage that we'll spend the majority of our time today.

Let me set the scene. The Apostle Paul was asked questions by the Corinthian church about matters of marriage, singleness and divorce and he answered them in this chapter. And the reason the questions were coming is because of how chaotic Corinth was. It was a messed up place. You see people in the Corinthian church didn't come out of a Jewish background. They didn't have an Old Testament view of marriage and divorce. They were Gentiles...pagans...and boy did they have marital issues and messed up thinking. Sounds like today!

You have to understand...many of the people living in Corinth under the reign of the Roman Empire were slaves. Many of these slaves in Corinth were now being saved. Problem was: marriage in a strict, legal sense didn't exist for slaves. A master could allow what was called *contubernium* or, "tent companionship..." living together, we would say. This was entered into by slaves without a ceremony and could be ended if the master chose to end it, and at any point he could sell one of the slaves, and that would end the relationship, obviously.

But, if you've become a Christian in one of these relationships, now what? What's your status? What should you do? On top of all of this was simply the depravity and the immorality of the rest of the people. So terribly pagan! Concubines were considered okay for the men. Fornication was rampant, and this was the chaos Paul was seeking to address. Marriage, as we know...as just read FROM JESUS' words is to be: between a man and a woman for life.

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Now, there's one last thing, (before we look at this passage), please understand that Paul's teaching is equal with Jesus' teaching...because just as Jesus' teaching is the Word of God, so is Paul's. 1 Corinthians 7 is just as divine as Matthew 19 and Matthew 5...it's all God's Word and it's all inerrant and authoritative...Genesis through Revelation. Amen? Now 1 Corinthians 7...we read these first verses four Sundays ago...but, see them again.

### **1 Corinthians 7:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." <sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

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Paul is saying, "Get married. Don't burn in lust. It's not wrong to be married. And don't go the other way with it...don't deprive one another, except for a short season of time...or you could succumb to temptation. Get married...love each...provide for each other in the bonds of marriage and enjoy your marriage." BUT...you may not be called to that...it's okay to be single.

### **1 Corinthians 7:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>7</sup> I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

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Now, the gift of singleness is exactly that...it's a gift. Celibacy is a gift. Jump down to verse 32

### **1 Corinthians 7:32-34a**

<sup>32</sup> I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided.

And isn't that true? If you're single you are freed up to do more for the kingdom than if you're married. But not everyone has the gift of singleness...so, to avoid fornication...get married...you're not more spiritual, if you don't get married. No, you're not more spiritual if you don't get married. And, don't conclude that there's anything wrong with the God-given gift of physical intimacy in marriage. Yes, if you feel you have the gift of singleness...you can get a whole lot more done being single than married. But understand...with singleness, the last thing that God wants out of singleness is sexual promiscuity. Be single if you have the gift, but if you don't, get married.

**Look at verse 8.** He's going to answer another question...this question is similar...but addresses the unmarried and widows...

**1 Corinthians 7:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. <sup>9</sup> But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

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We all know that a widow is someone whose spouse has died, right? But who are the unmarried people? Well, that can be a single people...and again...he's saying if you have the gift of singleness, stay that way...but, he can also mean those who were formerly married...not the widowed, but in this case...those who are divorced. So, Paul's instruction to the formerly married is the same: stay single if you can...but, if you can't, get married. Paul gave to Timothy the following instructions in regards to the young widows in Ephesus...

**1 Timothy 5:14**

<sup>14</sup> So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.

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So, if you have a young woman who has been widowed...it's good for you to get married again...and have children...a family...that's okay...they don't have to stay a widow for the rest of their lives, unless, of course...God has called them to that.

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Now we come to verse 10...and here, Paul is going to repeat the teaching of Jesus. Watch...

**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband <sup>11</sup> (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

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Remember Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let not man separate." God hates divorce. Don't divorce. One man, one woman, for life. If you go through a season of separation...the goal is reconciliation. And I'll say this...separation is usually the beginning of the end. I'm not talking about physical abuse...yes...separate...be safe...I'm talking about you just disagree and you separate. That's usually the beginning of the end. Don't let it get to that point.

**1 Corinthians 7:12-13**

<sup>12</sup> To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

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Paul is clearly saying: You don't have to divorce an unbelieving spouse. Because here's what had happened: the Gospel had come to Corinth and you had people getting saved...but, sometimes it wasn't both the husband and the wife...it was just one of the couple. Now what? Divorce? No...if they want to stay with you...stay...remain married. Why would you do that?

#### **1 Corinthians 7:14**

**14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.**

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Wait a minute...does this mean that the saved spouse can automatically save the lost spouse and the kids? No. "Made holy," in verse 14 means to make the home a sanctified place by your presence. You are a "sanctifying instrument/influence" in the hands of the Lord.

Hmmm... And some of you are living that. You come by yourself...you're trying your best to raise your family in the ways of the Lord, by yourself...and I want to tell you the Lord sees what you're doing, the sacrifices you're making and YOU ARE NOT BY YOURSELF. He is with you! He will provide for you and sustain you and give you what you need...day by day until your spouse is saved, or gets his/her lives right with the Lord.

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Now, in verse 15...Paul paints for us another scenario...and this is the second reason Scripture gives for divorce being an option.

#### **1 Corinthians 7:15**

**15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you<sup>[b]</sup> to peace.**

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What are the two reasons a person may divorce? #1 Adultery. #2 Your Spouse is lost and they choose to leave and divorce you. Paul in essence says, "If the unbelieving spouse leaves, let him/her leave." Now this doesn't mean that you don't fight for the marriage or seek counseling, but if you've tried to seek counsel and to reconcile and they refuse and they LEAVE...the verb is *chōrizō*, and in the Greek, it's the technical term used for divorce. And the teaching is...you don't have to live in bondage or be enslaved...God has called you to peace...let them go, you're no longer bound if they leave you. Yet, it seems were trying to hang on...and Paul addresses that:

#### **1 Corinthians 7:16**

**16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?**

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John MacArthur said it this way:

**"When the unconverted person is determined to leave and seeks a divorce, you don't need to perpetuate the tension and the frustration and the hatred and the animosity under some notion that you might be the only person on the planet who can be the instrument of salvation. That's for God to decide."** John MacArthur's, New Testament Bible Commentary

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Sometimes you've done all you can do, and if they're lost, you may not be able to change that...they want to leave...maybe it'll wake them up and they'll come to salvation. You say, "What if they're saved and they leave?" Paul says, "Remain as you are...stay married." In other words, don't you file the papers...pray with all you've got that perhaps you may be reconciled. But if they leave you...and they say they're saved...what can you do about that? They're sinning...that's on them and the truth is they can drag you into court and it can get real nasty. And so, at some point, you have to move on...and the truth is...by their actions...they made indeed be lost...no matter what they say. Actions speak louder than words...as we inspect the fruit.

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We come verses 17-24 which are a bit of summary. See it...

**1 Corinthians 7:17-24**

<sup>17</sup> Only let each person lead the life<sup>[c]</sup> that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. <sup>18</sup> Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. <sup>19</sup> For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. <sup>20</sup> Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. <sup>21</sup> Were you a bondservant<sup>[c]</sup> when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) <sup>22</sup> For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. <sup>23</sup> You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. <sup>24</sup> So, brothers,<sup>[e]</sup> in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

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Meaning this church, you can't change everything...there are certain circumstances and situations that we find ourselves in that we simply can't change on our own. Paul is simply saying: "Becoming a Christian doesn't mean that your present circumstances are going to necessarily change."

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Church family, I'll say it again...while this passage is about marriage, it's also true about life...there are situations that we're all in that wish were different...we can't change it. So, what do we do...mope around...act like Eeyore...



I've lost my tail...or do we bloom where we're at...trust the Lord for what we can't see yet...what He's not done yet. What about FAITH? Faith...the things that are hoped for but are yet unseen. Will you have faith? Maybe you needed to be reminded of that today.

Yes, some of you are in tough marriages and you don't speak this out aloud...but you think often about wanting out...they've not committed adultery...they're saved...but, you're struggling...because you're having to carry so much...verse 27 speaks to this

**1 Corinthians 7:27**

<sup>27</sup> Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

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It's the same thing...have faith...don't give up...keep praying...God can do what you can't do. What Paul is saying is: "You aren't allowed to chuck it just because it's hard!" Your commitment was for "better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part." Have faith!

**Well, the Corinthians had more questions:** what about those who are single, but are virgins, (male or female), think of young people...they are called the “betrothed,” they could even be engaged...but, they’re virgins.

**1 Corinthians 7:25-26**

<sup>25</sup> Now concerning<sup>[i]</sup> the betrothed,<sup>[a]</sup> I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. <sup>26</sup> I think that in view of the present<sup>[b]</sup> distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.

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Stay single if you can...if you have that gift. Don't rush it... Solomon said, “Don't awaken love too soon.” And I want to say this...I think this is good advice for 13, 14, 15-year-olds...because, they're just not in a position to be married in our day. We're going to have an entire message on “Dating and What the Bible Says about Biblical Relationships.” on Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>...don't awaken love too soon.

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Then we come to verse 28 and Paul says, “If you get married, it's okay.”

**1 Corinthians 7:28-35**

<sup>28</sup> But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman<sup>[i]</sup> marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. <sup>29</sup> This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, <sup>30</sup> and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, <sup>31</sup> and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. <sup>35</sup> I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

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Paul was painting a picture of reality...life is hard...and it certainly was for Christians in the first century...for those believers living in Corinth...the Emperor was Nero. He had just begun to reign, and by 64 AD (about 10 years from this writing) Rome would burn...and Nero would be blamed for it...some say that he started it so he could narcissistically put up marble statues of himself. That may or may not be true...but we do know that his poll numbers started to drop big-time, and he needed a scapegoat...and who did he use? Christians. And they would be hauled to Rome and fed to lions in the Coliseum or impaled on polls and set on fire to light the Apian Way. So, in essence, Paul was a prophet...he said... “Times are going to get tough...you might consider staying in your present condition...stay nimble...remain as you are...and remember...this present world is passing away and church...boy, do we need to be reminded of that fact today. Stay ready...Jesus is coming back!

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Finally, Paul...gives one last bit of encouragement to virgins...young people...and really the fathers of these young people. You say... “Just the fathers...no...the mothers too...but, the fathers in Jewish homes were responsible for delivering virgins...male and female to the marriage altar. In fact, when the father set the bride's price for his daughter, he was guaranteeing that she was a virgin. Watch...

**1 Corinthians 7:36-38**

<sup>36</sup> If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed,<sup>[i]</sup> if his<sup>[k]</sup> passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. <sup>37</sup> But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. <sup>38</sup> So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

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Once again: “Remain as you, if you can. But, either way...whether you marry or stay single...you've not done wrong.”

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Well, we're to the last two verses, and he answers the last question from the Corinthians... Should widows remarry? What do you think his answer is going to be. You know the answer...you can, but you don't have to...

**1 Corinthians 7:39-40**

<sup>39</sup>A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. <sup>40</sup>Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

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**Now two quick things as we close.** First, if you have divorced biblically, but you're still carrying bitterness...you need to let it go. It will eat you up. Let it go. I don't know who that's for...but, it needed to be said. Second and last, if you're saved and your married today...could I encourage you to do as Pam and I did...we decided that we would never allow the word "divorce" to come up in our home, and it never has...that's because it's not an option. Don't make it an option...no matter what.

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