

THE BEAUTY OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

STUDIES IN 1ST AND 2ND CORINTHIANS

1st Corinthians 7:1-40

'WHAT DOES GOD HAVE TO SAY ABOUT DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIPS AND SITUATIONSHIPS?'

INTRODUCTION: Having a healthy and mutually satisfying relationship takes hard work, and many people are not willing to pay the price or make the necessary sacrifices. Many people work harder on the wedding ceremony than they do on the marriage itself. Also, since we live in a world that has embraced non-biblical views of marriage and relationships, even Christians are struggling with doing what God commands of us, whether married or single.

BACKGROUND: The people in Corinth lived in a sex-saturated society, very similar to America today. Much of what they had learned about relationships was wrong. It is much more difficult to “unlearn” something you have been taught that was wrong, than to hear correctly and embrace it the first time. Some human minds have associated sex outside of marriage as normal, others see it as sinful, and some felt sexual activity in marriage was wrong. These thoughts make it difficult to have relationships the way God intended.

I. EVERYBODY HAS A BODY, BUT HARDLY ANYBODY SEEMS TO KNOW WHY! GLORIFY GOD WITH YOUR BODY! (1st Corinthians 7:1-9)

- A. As Paul responded to questions from the Corinthians, *he often quoted them before correcting them*. Probably because of sinful associations, many felt it was best to not have sexual relationships with women. Paul corrected them by saying that men and women should have their own spouses in order to avoid the sin of fornication. (1st Corinthians 7:1-2)
- B. Some religions have taught that abstinence was the highest form of spiritual dedication to serve the Lord. The commitment of marriage was not advisable because of its demands and the pledge of a lifetime vow. (Matthew 19:3-12) However, the Lord honors the institution of marriage, as He created it for the good of mankind. It is the only acceptable venue for sexual activity (Hebrews 13)
- C. Our duty to satisfy one another was intended to be a mutual delight. Scripture says that we do not have authority over our own bodies, but many miss the context of the conversation. God owns our bodies, and we should exercise authority over our own bodies to do what is right. What Paul is primarily speaking about is that we were not designed to please ourselves sexually. We receive pleasure when we strive to please our spouse. (1st Corinthians 7:3-4)
- D. We should not deprive our spouse of the pleasure God intended for marriage. Abstinence should be by mutual consent for a temporary season of dedicated spiritual pursuit, and then come together so Satan does not have room to tempt either of you. If you do not have the gift of singleness, you should prayerfully pursue marriage rather than let your unfulfilled needs cause you to sin. (1st Corinthians 7:5-9)

II. MARRIAGE VOWS ARE MEANT TO LAST A LIFETIME. SPIRITUAL POWER IS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO KEEP THEIR PROMISES. (1st Corinthians 7:10-16)

- A. The presence of a believer in a household “sanctifies” the entire family. This is not the sanctification that happens to individual believers at salvation. This term means a family is “set apart” because the Lord can work through the believer to minister to family members. We do not know ahead of time if the Lord will save our spouse, but we should not give up when He has not told us to quit. If the *UNBELIEVER PERMANENTLY LEAVES*, the believer can remarry in the Lord. (1st Corinthians 7:10-16)

III. LEARN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A “COMMANDMENT” AND AN “OPTION” THAT IMPACTS RELATIONSHIP DECISIONS. (1st Corinthians 7: 17-35)

- A. There are times when a believer should simply choose to serve the Lord in the condition they were in when He called them. Circumcised or not, slave or free, being in Christ is what matters most! Obeying the Lord takes precedence over any social conditions we may desire. (1st Corinthians 7:17-24) Jesus warned of family concerns during times of persecution when caring for family could slow down one’s escape. (Matthew 24:15-22)
- B. Paul had to give instructions to fathers who were concerned about when to give their daughters in marriage during difficult times. In times of pending persecution, it was advisable to stay in their current situations, even though marriage was not wrong or sinful. Marriage at that time would have added another layer of difficulties. (1st Corinthians 7:25-28)
- C. We should always remember that time is short when we consider eternity, and that truth should influence our daily choices. It is always the right time to live for the Lord, whether married or single. Marriage and family responsibilities are important and often cause distractions when tough choices must be made between serving God and family needs. Remember that we serve the Lord as we serve others, and that included our families. (1st Corinthians 7:29-31)
- D. The single person (like Paul!) will have opportunities to focus on serving the Lord without other distractions whereas the married person has to be concerned with serving their spouse and family while serving the Lord. All of us are to be devoted to the Lord, but that devotion may look different depending upon your family situations. (1st Corinthians 7: 32-35)
- E. Paul gave practical advice to those who were considering marriage and feeling like their window of opportunity may be closing. It was not a sin to get married, but he still felt that the present conditions made it advisable to wait if at all possible. Marriage is intended to be an “until death do us part” commitment. A Christian who becomes a widow or widower is free to remarry after the death of a spouse, but only to another believer. Paul was happier remaining single (did he once have a spouse who died or deserted him? Phil. 3:8-10) and encouraged others to do so if they were able. (1st Corinthians 7:36-40)

GOD’S PLANS FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIP WILL ALWAYS BE MORE SATISFYING THAN YOUR OWN. HE KNOWS *WHAT* IS BEST FOR YOU AND *WHO* IS BEST FOR YOU. IF WE DO NOT LEARN TO BE FULLY CONTENTED IN HIM, WE WILL NOT BE SATISFIED IN ANY OTHER RELATIONSHIP, AND WE WILL DEMAND FROM OTHERS WHAT ONLY A LOVING GOD CAN PROVIDE. IF YOU LOVE HIM RIGHT, YOU CAN BECOME THE RIGHT PERSON FOR SOMEONE ELSE.

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