

1st Corinthians Chapter 7

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Introduction:

We must repeat what we said in Mark chapter ten:

If we discussed all of the Bible's teaching about divorce and remarriage, it would take more space than this entire 12 page lesson. We trust that what is written here will not be used to solve some of the real-world problems that arise about marriage and divorce in the church. Find out the full Word of God, not just this passage.

PAUL NOW BEGINS ON THE QUESTIONS THAT HAD BEEN ASKED

(1) Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations. (2) But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

- All of the admonitions and corrections that Paul had discussed up to this time he had gleaned from public talk. The Corinthian church leaders did not bring them up. They were either hoping to hide them or did not consider them of any importance.
- They had asked about **sexual relations** and Paul here responds. There are advantages in not being married, but also advantages in marriage. He picks up the question again later.
- Marriage is a hedge against **sexual immortality**. Polygamy was not even considered in Paul's response because it was no longer practiced among believers. Notice his use of **own** in verse two. The immoral "open

marriage” of current times was not mentioned either. A Christian marriage is one man married to one woman and any violation of this is adultery.

MARRIAGE IS A PARTNERSHIP

(3) The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. (4) The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife.

- Each mate should respond to the **sexual needs** of their partner. It is not an element of negotiation as in other husband and wife matters.

Not: “I will if you will mow the lawn this afternoon”
or “I will if you fix tacos for my supper.”

Paul Butler writes:

In marriage, both husband and wife give up exclusive rights to their own bodies (and lives), agreeing to share them fully and freely with their partner. The happiest marriages are those characterized by complete liberty, few inhibitions, and absence of any guilt complex about sexuality within the will of God.

The cause of much marital trouble today is *selfishness*, not only, but certainly foremost, in the area of sexuality. The Greek word *exousiazei* is in the present tense indicating that this reciprocal surrendering of husband and wife to one another is a *continuing* and *permanent* relationship.

(5) Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- The only exception was if both husband and wife agreed so they could give themselves **more completely to prayer**. But that was a very **limited time**.

(6) I say this as a concession, not as a command. (7) But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another.

- Paul acknowledged that not every person had the **special gift from God** of staying single.

THE BOND MUST NOT BE BROKEN

(8) So I say to those who aren't married and to widows -- it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. (9) But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust.

- Paul concludes that those who are single or **widows** are better off remaining **unmarried**. But if they couldn't handle the emotions and the drive, then go ahead and **marry**.

(10) But for those who are married, I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband.

- Paul is not saying that his previous words were not inspired, but that he was now quoting **the Lord** directly. This is seen clearly in verse 12.
- The command from **the Lord** may be this one:

Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together. (Matthew 19:6 NLT)

- Let's consult **Paul Butler** on this:

Apparently in Corinth, new converts to Christ were leaving their believing partners, or unbelieving

partners were leaving their believing partners, and completely dissolving the marriages by divorce.

When Christians marry non-Christians, or when one unbeliever in a marriage becomes a believer and the other partner does not, there will always be difficulties, But, according to the apostle Paul, they are not insurmountable difficulties.

The difficulties of such an “unequally yoked” marriage are not necessarily such as should call for divorce. The ideal situation, of course, is that both partners in a marriage be Christians. People who are contemplating marriage can and should choose Christian partners.

Love is not blind! Infatuation and emotionalism is blind. Love is not something one “falls into” but is something one wills, decides and does, and does constantly in spite of emotions or circumstances!

(11) But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be reconciled to him. And the husband must not leave his wife.

- Even though the Lord is specific about a **wife** not leaving her **husband**, we can expect some to do this anyway. Then her options narrow. She must **remain single** or be **reconciled to him. The husband is not to leave his wife.** The monthly *Psychology Today* reports that 6% of those who divorce remarry their former mates. They have found a way to either resolve the original problems or to get a solution underway with the help of a professional.
- **Leaving** is *divorce*. Here in verse 11 **leaving** caused one to be **single**.

(12) Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a Christian man

has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her.

- The excitement of marriage has become badly shopworn and the man wants out of the contract. The **man** may have faced the reality that his life values and life purpose do not match those of his wife. She worships idols and gives some of the family money to the deaf and dumb carving. He cannot divorce her.
- A mate married to an **unbeliever** is *spiritually single* and misses out on some of life's great moments.
 1. The *joy* of praying together is missing.
 2. The *contentment* of viewing the Lord's dealings from His viewpoint is absent.
 3. The *satisfaction* of turning problems of health, life and death over to the Lord is lacking.

(13) And if a Christian woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him. (14) For the Christian wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the Christian husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not be holy, but now they are holy.

- **If a Christian woman** is married to an **unbeliever** and **he** is willing to **continue** the marriage, she must not divorce him. She brings the beauty of **holiness** to the **marriage** and demonstrates **holiness** to their **children** so they can become believers.

(15) (But if the husband or wife who isn't a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is no longer bound to the other, for God has called you to live in peace.)

- Abandonment is grounds for a believer to divorce. Actually, they may have received a divorce from the other party already.

(16) Don't you wives realize that your husbands might be saved because of you? And don't you husbands realize that your wives might be saved because of you?

- A possibility of living with an unbeliever is that they might be **saved** by the believer's words or example. Peter also spoke of this possibility:

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives.

(1 Peter 3:1-2 NLT)

SERVING GOD WHERE HE HAS PLACED US

(17) Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you. This is my rule for all the churches.

- Believers are to remain as they were **called**. Becoming a believer is not grounds for leaving a mate. Paul taught this everywhere. It was a universal rule wherever the apostle taught.

(18) For instance, a man who was circumcised before he became a believer should not try to reverse it. And the man who was uncircumcised when he became a believer should not be circumcised now. (19) For it makes no difference whether or not a man has been circumcised. The important thing is to keep God's commandments.

- There were **believers** trying to **reverse** their **circumcision**. This is reflected in people today trying to change from man to woman and woman to man, usually under the tutelage of adults hoping to make money from the futile efforts. Some who get involved are led to suicide because what they were promised is impossible.

- That such a thing was practiced in those times is affirmed by the Jewish historian **Josephus**:

Wherefore they desired his permission to build them a Gymnasium at Jerusalem. And when he had given them leave, they also hid the circumcision of their genitals, that even when they were naked they might appear to be Greeks. Accordingly, they left off all the customs that belonged to their own country, and imitated the practices of the other nations. (*Antiquities 12:5:1*)

(20) Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you. (21) Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you -- but if you get a chance to be free, take it.

- Remaining without change applies to more than sex changes. Remain **a slave** unless you have a clear chance at personal freedom. Sometimes a kind person would purchase a **slave** in the market and make them **free**.

(22) And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ.

- Being **free in the Lord** is a wonderful upgrade for a believer if they are offered the opportunity. When the **Lord** calls a **slave**, that man or woman is viewed by the **Lord** as **free**. And conversely, when a **free** man or woman is **called**, they become **a slave of Christ**.

(23) God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world. (24) Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, should remain as you were when God first called you.

- **God paid a high price** in the market place of life to free each person and we must remain as we are -- whether in bondage or personally free. Contentment is God's goal for us. Remaining in our calling was important to Paul because he mentions it in verse 17, verse 20 and verse 24.

- In the old Testament, *Joseph* was sold into slavery and God raised him to be the second-ranking ruler in Egypt. *Daniel* was taken to Babylon as a prisoner of war and God raised him to be the third-ranking ruler in Babylon and *Esther* was raised to become the queen of Persia.

THE CRISIS IS AT HAND

(25) Now regarding your question about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in His mercy has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you.

- The **Lord** did not say anything that applies to never-married women. Paul has divine **wisdom** and offers a path forward.

(26) Because of the present crisis, I think it is best to remain as you are. (27) If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married.

- Some **crisis** was seen unfolding in Corinth. If **married, remain as you are**. Paul advised that being single would be better than becoming **married**.

(28) But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married, it is not a sin. However, those who get married at this time will have troubles, and I am trying to spare you those problems.

- The choice was not a matter of right or wrong. Neither choice was **a sin**.
- It would be easier to get through the crisis **unmarried** and Paul was trying to **spare** his readers some **problems**.

(29) But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage.

- The crisis was very near. Believers will need to **focus** on it *as well as* their **marriages**. It is necessary to **focus** on having a successful **marriage** whether there is a crisis as in Corinth or without a crisis. For us, this means putting time and money into the project.

(30) Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. (31) Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.

- **Paul Butler** is very specific here:

They would have to worry about another mouth to feed when as Christians they would be forced to starve; they would worry about seeing a beloved mate or child tortured to death in the arena. These anxieties and many others would constantly plague Christians during the great tribulation period of Roman persecution. Paul was trying to keep Christians from having to bear such burdens.

(32) I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please Him.

- All believers should be seeking to **please** the **Lord** Jesus. The old Covenant was a system of laws primarily, but the new covenant is one of the heart and goes beyond obedience to giving thought on how to **please** the **Lord**. He set the example for us when He said:

And the One who sent Me is with Me -- He has not deserted Me. For I always do what pleases Him.
(John 8:29 NLT)

Then the following makes good sense:

Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.
(Ephesians 5:10 NLT)

For some, this could be an entirely new view of the Faith.

(33) But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. (34) His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband.

- When either a believing lady or a believing man is not **married**, their opportunities for service to the Lord may be much wider than their **married** counterparts who must devote a significant portion of their time to **pleasing** their mate.

REMARRIAGE

(35) I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

- Paul was not binding a solution on his readers. Next, he brings us some conditions where marriage is preferred.

(36) But if a man thinks that he's treating his fiancée improperly and will inevitably give in to his passion, let him marry her as he wishes. It is not a sin. (37) But if he has decided firmly not to marry and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry.

- There was no **sin** involved if a **man** was driven to **marry his fiancée**. Corinth was a city where opportunities for immorality were everywhere.

(38) So the person who marries his fiancée does well, and the person who doesn't marry does even better.

- Either option is acceptable. The one who chooses not to **marry** is in a somewhat **better** position. The choice was not between good and bad, but better and best.

(39) A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord. (40) But in my opinion it would be better for her to stay single, and I think I am giving you counsel from God's Spirit when I say this.

- The **death** of a spouse ends the marriage. This is also affirmed in Romans 7:1-3.

Now, dear brothers and sisters -- you who are familiar with the law -- don't you know that the law applies only while a person is living? For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

(Romans 7:1-3 NLT)

- Paul adds a restriction: She must **marry** a man who **loves the Lord**. It doesn't say "someone who was once baptized but now has little thought about spiritual matters."