



THE TALK

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-40

CONNECT

Did your parents give you “the Talk”? Have you ever had to give “the Talk” to your kids? What was involved in that?

WORD

1 Corinthians 7:1-9 (ESV) - ¹Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” ²But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ³The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴For 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. ⁵Do 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. ⁶Now as a concession, not a command, I say this, ⁷I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. ⁸To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. ⁹But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

WHAT**What does the Bible say?**

This is one of those passages of scripture that is often misunderstood and frequently quoted out of context. Clearly, Paul is writing in response to questions that have been asked by the people of the Corinthian church. They have developed a notion that Christian principles of sexual purity should be extended. In other words, if a little sexual purity is good, then a lot would be even better. This was not unique to the Christians in Corinth or even something new. Ascetic philosophies had been around for centuries throughout the world and in Greek and Roman culture the Stoic teachings of Zeno based on abstinence from all worldly pleasures would have been well known to all of the people of the time.

Paul's response seems to recognize the prevalence of these philosophies but at the same to recognize the pitfalls of this kind of thinking. You see, the same people who advocated this abstinence from all worldly pleasures were also of the opinion that loveless sex with prostitutes for a purely biological release was preferable to the intimacy that could be found in proper marital relations.

Paul recognized that this is one of the dangers of this kind of philosophy. He counselled that the ability to remain pure is a special gift from God and that not everyone has been gifted in this way. For most people, it is better for them to find appropriate partners and to honor God with a Christian marriage. Paul advises that this is better than allowing your physical urges to build to the point that you make unwise decisions because of your vulnerability to temptation.

Paul goes on to state that if someone is married that they have a spiritual obligation to fulfill the physical desires of their spouse. He advises that the only exception to this is if a couple decides mutually to engage in a kind of sexual fast for the purpose of devoting yourself to spiritual matters.

Paul makes clear in this passage that marriage is ordained by God and is the only context in which sexual expression is appropriate. The overall tone of Paul's writing here seems to indicate that trying to live in a manner that is in opposition to the gifts that have been given to you by God is dangerous business that leaves us vulnerable to temptation.

SO WHAT

What is the relevance to my life?

- What really stood out to you in today's message and lesson? What would you like to discuss further with the group?
- Paul is offering advice on issues of marriage and divorce. Offering advice can be a delicate matter. What are some principles to follow when giving and receiving advice? Does Paul follow those principles? Why or why not? What are some examples from this passage that support your view?
- This passage speaks to several debates in contemporary society – about the relative merits of marriage and celibacy, the proper time for sexual abstinence and the legitimate grounds for divorce. When, if ever, is it fitting to subordinate personal convictions on such matters to the standards of the larger Christian community?

- The prevailing attitudes about marriage and divorce have changed radically in our culture over the last few decades. How does something that Paul wrote two thousand years ago apply to today? Does the passage of time change the way we view Biblical truths?

NOW WHAT

How do I apply the word to my life?



How does this lesson change the way you think about sex and marriage? Why did God choose this moment to bring this lesson to you?



What has God laid on your heart with this lesson? How does Paul's advice on sex and singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage change the way you feel about your relationship with God?



What does God want you to do differently this week as a result of this lesson? What specific plan will you put in place to follow God's plan for your sexuality? How will you demonstrate your obedience to God in your sex life?

How can we help you and hold you accountable? How can we pray for you? What can we do to show our love for you this week? Who do you know that needs to hear this lesson? Who can you share it with?

