

## 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 Marriage & Celibacy

Beginning in 1:10 through 6:20 Paul addressed problems in the Corinthian church that were reported to him (1 Corinthians 1:11). Pride and arrogance were at the root of their many problems. Beginning in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul continues to address their problems but he now specifically begins to answer questions they have asked.

### Verse 1

*The things about which you wrote* – Paul is answering questions they asked in a letter to him.

*It is good* – Much of what Paul says in this chapter is from his perspective as a single man in ministry as an Apostle. It is like us saying, “If it were me, this is what I’d do...” However, Paul is very clear that not everyone has the same gifts (verse 7) and is not saying that one state or the other is more spiritual.

*Touch a woman* - A euphemism for sexual intimacy.

### Verse 2

*Because of immoralities* – This is the word *porneia* which refers to any type of sexual immorality.

*Let each man have his own wife* – Paul viewed marriage as God-ordained and perfectly proper for Christians. He is also recognizing that sexual intimacy was intended by God only within the marriage relationship.

*Let each woman have her own husband* – Paul clearly teaches monogamy, one man and one woman in the marriage relationship.

### Verse 3

*His duty...her duty* – Each partner in marriage needs to fulfill his or her sexual duty to the spouse. Paul goes on in the following verses to explain why this is important.

### Verse 4

*The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does* – This was a common idea in the culture of that day. Women had very few rights and were often viewed as owned by their husband.

*The husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does* – This was contrary to the culture. Paul taught that the husband and wife had equal sexual rights within the marriage relationship. Each partner was to give up certain personal rights for the purpose of enriching the marriage.

### Verse 5

*Stop depriving one another* – Evidently some of the Corinthians, because of their incorrect view of the body-spirit relationship, concluded that they did not need to have sexual relations with their spouses, or they viewed the sexual relationship as a “necessary evil” and tried to limit it.

*Except by agreement* – There are legitimate reasons for temporary abstinence but both husband and wife should agree to the abstinence.

*Devote yourselves to prayer* – Paul gives this as an example of a legitimate spiritual reason for a period of abstinence.

*Come together again* – The agreement needed to have a specific time.

*Lest Satan tempt you* – One of Satan’s devices is to take legitimate needs and pervert them. Because God intended a man and woman’s sexual needs to be fulfilled within the marriage relationship Satan has been on the constant offensive against marriage and the home.

*Lack of self control* – We usually view sexual activity as a lack of self control. Paul viewed the failure to engage in sex as a lack of self control for a married person.

### Verse 6

*By way of concession, not of command* – Some think Paul is referring to marriage but that is unlikely in view of Genesis 1:28 and 2:24. His concession was for allowing temporary abstinence from sex. Abstinence was the exception to what was normal in Paul’s view.

### Verse 7

*I wish that all men were even as I myself am* – To Paul the single state had certain advantages for a servant of the Lord.

*Each man has his own gift* – This is referring to the ability to live single or to live married. The word for gift, *charisma*, is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 1:7 and in chapter 12 where Paul speaks of spiritual gifts. The gift of celibacy is a special ability that God gives only to some people. Marriage is the norm.

### Verses 8-9 The option of singleness

*Unmarried and widows* – Paul recognized the unmarried state had some advantages over being married. There was also the tendency for people in that culture to look down on those who were single.

*Better to marry than to burn* – To burn with sexual passion. God will give grace to the single person to control their desire until God brings a suitable mate into their lives.