

**GROW**  
**Remaining**  
**1 Corinthians 7**

**Bloom where you are planted!** This is an age-old saying about being where you are and making the MOST of it. [PLANT ILLUSTRATION] But there is a problem. We don't like to do it. We will have a hard time growing where we are planted when we feel like we are free to keep uprooting and moving to new pasture! It is just so EASY and ACCEPTED for us to do that; but is it WISE or GODLY or BENEFICIAL? I think not. Paul deals very clearly with this in our chapter today.

**The grass is GREENER on the other side of the fence.** This is another age-old saying, but it speaks to our restless nature. We believe that, especially when the grass on our side looks so brown and dry and lifeless. There are so many REASONS (we think) why we should be allowed to uproot when life does not seem to be treating us well. If our neighborhood starts looking worn out and run down, we move. If our friendships sour, we "unfriend them." If our church gets boring, we move our letter. If our spouse starts gaining weight or getting cranky, we drift toward divorce. Paul responds to these destructive tendencies by giving us so surprising advice:

**STAY PUT and START LIVING.**

Are you in a dead-end job or a ball-and-chain marriage? Stay put!! When you do so, you have to TRUST GOD that the grass is not really greener on the other side of the fence! This is counter to culture and to our fallen nature. **We believe that what we DON'T have is so much better than what we DO have, and we think that if we do not change our pastures then we will never be HAPPY! [This makes us look like a dog chasing his tail!]** Paul gives us a much different – and a much more stable and hopeful – perspective on our life circumstances. We will look at the details in a moment, but let's begin by reading ONE of the FIVE instances in this passage where Paul tells us to stay put! **1 Corinthians 7:17, 20 The Message**

**17** And don't be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. **Where you are right now is God's place for you.** Live and obey and love and believe right there. God, not your marital status, **defines** your life. Don't think I'm being harder on you than on the others. I give this same counsel in all the churches. **20 Stay where you were when God called your name.**

**\*JOY begins with CONTENTMENT, not CIRCUMSTANCE!**

- Find joy where you are instead of looking for happiness everywhere else!
- Learn to see your circumstances as God's current ASSIGNMENT for you.
- \*Is your FAITH your true IDENTITY?

**\*Purpose is found by embracing your CALLING. 1 Corinthians 7:21-24 MSG**

**21-22** Were you a slave? Slavery is no roadblock to obeying and believing. I don't mean you're stuck and can't leave. If you have a chance at freedom, go ahead and take it. I'm simply trying to point out that under your new Master you're going to experience a marvelous freedom you would never have dreamed of. On the other hand, if you were free when Christ called you, you'll experience a delightful "enslavement to God" you would never have dreamed of. **23-24** All of you, slave and free both, were once held hostage in a sinful society. Then a huge sum was paid out for your ransom. So please don't, out of old habit, slip back into being or doing what everyone else tells you. Friends, **stay where you were called to be. God is there.** Hold the high ground with him at your side.

- God finds you right where he wants to USE you. [Dead-end Job? Marriage?]
- \*Paul's words to some believers who were SLAVES!
- He was not trying to start a protest movement, but encourage real people!
- \*Circumstances DO NOT LIMIT the purposes of God in your life.
- His PRESENCE is the key to your FULFILLMENT and your POTENTIAL.

We must learn to apply this truth to the way that we view our RELATIONAL status. This may require us to adjust our attitudes and halt some bad habits!

### **Stop looking for LOOPHOLES and LICENSES.**

FOR THOSE WHO ARE MARRIED:

**\*Marriage is NOT a solitary cure for sexual struggle. [7:7-9]**  
 7 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. 8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to **remain single as I am**. 9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

- Understand the phrase: "It is better to marry than to burn."  
 \*If you want to put out the fire, get married? [Not really!]  
 \*Marriage does not remove sexual temptation. [Really!]

-Learn the truth that SEX is a DUTY as well as a PLEASURE. [7:1-4]  
 1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 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. 5 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.

-DUTY = Due Benevolence; FULFILL = Give away for one's own profit!

-Learn MUTUAL authority of one another's bodies!

\*This is a REVERSE POWER PLAY!

-Use abstinence only as a way to RESTORE passion to your marriage.

**\*Marriage is a LIFELONG COVENANT**

-Believers are expected to honor this covenant FOR LIFE! [7:10-11]

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

\*JESUS established this HIGH STANDARD for marriage.

**\*Believers: Will you accept this truth BEFORE you say "I Do"?**

-This covenant does not guarantee the absence of marital disharmony! [7:12-16]

12 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. 13 If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 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. 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 to peace. 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?

\*Leverage the power of HOLINESS for your HOME.

-Your presence may lead them to salvation by exposing them to holiness!

\*What do you do if they LEAVE YOU? [Adultery and Abandonment]

-Some see these two issues as a biblical basis for divorce and remarriage.

-The goal must be RECONCILIATION rather than SEPARATION.

**\*Marriage requires a BALANCED FOCUS! [7:32-35 ESV]**

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. 33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. 35 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

-Married people NEED to consider ways to lovingly serve their spouse!

**"Promote GOOD ORDER!" [NASB says, "promote what is appropriate!"]**

\*Don't get married if you are not committed to the WORK of PLEASING!

-Married people also NEED to cultivate exclusive DEVOTION to God alone!

**"Secure UNDIVIDED DEVOTION to the Lord."**

\*Marriage does not EXEMPT you from wholehearted devotion to God!

- . . . Neither does DATING or FRIENDSHIP or any other relationship!

## FOR THOSE WHO ARE SINGLE:

### \*Embrace the potentials of singleness

- Paul did not equate SINGLENESS with LONELINESS! [Christopher Yuan]
  - \*Learn the difference between INTIMACY and SEX.
    - Intimacy is a part of biblical COMMUNITY.
    - Christian people (married and single) are all related by mutual covenant!

-Paul knew that singleness requires the GIFT of GRACE. [Superheroes are single]

\*Learn what creates a WAR between your gifts and your passions

- The EXPECTATIONS of others [Pressure to marry]
- Church has elevated marriage beyond Scripture.
- Culture has created a hyper-sexualized ENVIRONMENT.
  - \*How are you guarding yourself from this?
  - \*You won't DIE if you don't WED!

-Valuing undistracted devotion to God

\*Paul (and JESUS!) affirmed singleness as a distinct ADVANTAGE

-Realizing maximum effectiveness for ministry and vocation

25 Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. 26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.

-This is a description of BETROTHAL, not modern marriage.

### \*Remember that marriage is a CHOICE: Choose wisely!

- Refuse to FANTASIZE about the realities of marriage
- Remember God's HIGH VIEW of the Marriage Covenant! [7:39-40]

39 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. 40 Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

\*Marriage and remarriage must ONLY be "IN THE LORD." [Choose ONCE!]

\*Your happiness does NOT depend upon your marital status.

Are you currently tempted to uproot and move to the other side of the fence? Along with Paul, I plead with you to REMAIN where you are and BLOOM where you are planted!

Let's pray.