

1 CORINTHIANS 7

bloom where you're planted

Review / Preview

In chapter 6, Paul condemns the abuse of God's gift of sex. The Christian's body belongs to the Lord. Sexual immorality is desecrating what belongs to Christ.

In chapter 7, Paul speaks of the proper use of sex within marriage and presents factors in Christian decision-making regarding marriage and singlehood. More broadly, he emphasizes that there is not a holier station in life for the Christian.

Outline

7:1-7	Sex belongs to marriage: No sex outside of it; fulfill your duty inside of it
7:8-9	To widowed Christians: Singlehood is good, but only if a person has the gift of self-control
7:10-11	To married Christians: Stay married!
7:12-16	To Christians married to unbelievers: Stay married! But if abandoned, you are not bound in such circumstances
7:17-24	To all Christians: Serve the Lord where he has placed you
7:25-40	The blessings of singlehood in "the present crisis"

Verses 1-7. Literally: ***"It is good for a man not to touch a woman."*** As in 6:12-13, Paul is quoting the Corinthians. Why might some Corinthian Christians say such a thing? Does Paul agree?

What rationale does Paul to tell married Christians to be sexually active with each other?

Verses 8-9. What is "good" about widowhood (cf. 7:28b, 32-34)? Why is it not "good" for many people?

Verses 10-11. If someone wrongfully divorces, are they "stuck" in singlehood?

Verses 12-14. Compare verse 10: ***(not I, but the Lord)*** with verse 12: ***(I, not the Lord)***. What is Paul contrasting?

What might have prompted Corinthian Christians to contemplate divorcing their unbelieving spouses? How should verses 12-13 be applied to a present-day Christian who is contemplating marriage to an unbeliever?

In a “mixed” marriage, what effect does the Christian spouse have on the unbeliever? On their children?

Verses 15-16. Paul is still addressing “mixed” marriages, but how has the scenario changed?

What is Paul asking the hesitant Christian spouse to consider in verse 16?

Scripture permits divorce in two circumstances: 1) Adultery; and 2) Malicious desertion. 1 Corinthians 7:15 describes the circumstance of “malicious desertion.” What does it involve?

Verses 12-16 deal with the question, *I’ve converted to Christianity but I’m still married to an unbeliever. What should I do?* What is Paul’s answer?

Verses 17-24 broaden the question: *I’ve converted to Christianity. Now what should I do with my life in general?* What is Paul’s answer? (He repeats himself 3x!)

Explain the paradox in verse 22: ***For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave.***

The doctrine of Christian vocation crops up often in Martin Luther’s writings. Can you imagine why?

Verses 25-35. Both singlehood and marriage are God-pleasing vocations. In these verses, however, Paul advocates for singlehood.

What benefits does singlehood have, especially in “the present crisis”?

Apply verses 29-31 to Christian stewardship.

Verses 36-38. The interpretation of this passage hinges on how one understands the characters involved. Is it talking about 1) a fiancé and his fiancée or about 2) a father and his daughter? A more literal translation of verse 36: ***If anyone thinks that he is acting dishonorably toward his virgin...***

Verses 39-40. Finally, Paul addresses widows and widowers. The marriage has been ended by God and they are free to remarry, while also keeping in mind the benefits of singlehood. The NIV is interpretive in verse 40. More literally: ***She is free to get married to whomever she wishes, but only in the Lord.***