

## **How To Find Contentment?**

### **What Does The Bible Say?**

**Paul advises those who marry to have a wholehearted sex life. (1 Corinthians 7:3)**

**Paul says it's good to be single. (1 Corinthians 7:8)**

**It's not abnormal to remain single, and it's not second-best to marry. Both marriage and singleness are right when they are God's purpose for you.**

### **How Can You Obey?**

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.

20 Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you.

24 Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, should remain as you were when God first called you.

26 Because of the present crisis, I think it is best to remain as you are. (1 Corinthians 7:17; 20; 24; 26 NLT)

**We think that a change in circumstances is always the answer to a problem. But the problem is usually within us and not around us.**

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. (1 Corinthians 7:18–19 NLT)

**Obedience is the measure of love.**

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. 23 God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world. (1 Corinthians 7:22–23 NLT)

**Christ now dictates our lives.**

**The only people who profit from divorces are the attorneys!**

### **Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

### **Explore:**

That Paul is this letter's author there is little doubt. Even the most imaginative critics find no objection on this point. The apostle came to Corinth (Acts 18:1–18) on his second

missionary journey (probably in the spring of a.d. 51 as the proconsulship of Gallio likely began later that year, in July).

There Paul met Aquila and Priscilla who had left Rome in a.d. 49, when Claudius issued an edict ordering the expulsion of Jews from that city. The couple ran a tent-making business, a trade also practiced by Paul. Since no mention is made of their conversions, they were probably Christians when Paul met them. With a kinship along spiritual, ethnic, and vocational lines, Paul was naturally attracted to them.

According to his custom Paul attended the synagogue and took part in its services, seeking to persuade his hearers that Jesus is the Messiah. When the synagogue was closed to Paul, he went next door to the house of a synagogue listener who heard and believed, a Gentile named Titius Justus (Acts 18:7). He was one of many people in Corinth who belonged to the Lord.

David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 504–505.

**Explore:**

Christian freedom is not to be expressed by breaking our marriage vows, fretting about our condition or rejecting our work. Instead, we are to enjoy a new freedom in our circumstances—because we belong to Christ. Every situation is God-given or God-allowed—a place in which we can know his calling and his grace.

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 582.

**Explore:**

The word translated calling, condition, or situation in verse 20 is a Greek word from which we get our English idea of station or

role. Paul was acknowledging that within the church people will have various callings, stations, or roles and we are to be careful not to desire to trade places with another person whose life situation may seem better than ours. His point is fairly simple: whether you are circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free, be content in that condition and use it as a means of serving God.

**Explore:**

Having just urged his believing readers to continue to live in marriage with their unbelieving spouses who are willing to stay married (7:12–13, 16), Paul takes a sudden step out of the specific issue of marriage to address a matter that underlies the entire discussion: getting the most out of our lot in life. Paul appeals to a universal principle, one which he shared with all the churches: to remain in the general condition in which a person

was called as a Christian (7:17). Because God has called each person from a particular social realm and unique life situation, that person should continue in that same situation. Why? The answer: in order to continue as a light in that particular social sphere (7:16).

Because such a principle could be easily misunderstood and misapplied, Paul immediately offers several concrete examples of the kinds of social and cultural realms he had in mind:

- Jewish believers should not shed their Jewishness and act like Gentiles (7:18).
- Gentiles should not shed their unique culture and act like Jews (7:18).
- Slaves should not fret about being freed from their legal obligations of service (7:21).
- Those who are free should not seek to indenture themselves to new masters (7:21, 23).

- The engaged should not break off their engagements (7:27).
- The single should not rush into marriage (7:27).

In the midst of these basic instructions, Paul intends that each believer find contentment to remain in whatever condition that person was in when called (7:20, 24). Supporting this principle is both a theological reason and a practical reason.

Charles R. Swindoll, 1 & 2 Corinthians, vol. 7 of Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2017), 117.

### **Explore:**

Imagine if everybody who became a Christian decided to take vows of celibacy, poverty, silence, and solitude, forsaking their careers, families, communities, and pastimes. The body of Christ would shrivel up and die as it morphed into a corporate recluse, turning its back on the world and retreating into obscurity. The church's strategic presence in the nooks and crannies of this

world would silently vanish like water vaporizing on a sunny day. Or imagine if all new believers turned their calling as a Christian into a calling to full-time vocational ministry. That may sound like an answer to prayer, but in reality the distorted body of Christ would grow top-heavy and topple as it lost all of its faithful, generous lay people whose honest labor in the secular realm produces an abundance of wealth to support those in ministry. The practical truth is that God has called people from all paygrades, social strata, lifestyles, careers, cultures, and situations in order to create a community of diversity and harmony, not sameness and monotony. As we believers exercise contentment and remain in the circumstances in which we were called, we continue to be salt and light in our own communities. We continue to exercise an influence on our unsaved friends, relatives, colleagues, and acquaintances.

Charles R. Swindoll, 1 & 2 Corinthians, vol. 7 of Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2017), 118.

**Explore:**

Salvation does not change the marriage state. If the wife's becoming a Christian annulled the marriage, then the children in the home would become illegitimate ("unclean" in 1 Cor. 7:14). Instead, these children may one day be saved if the Christian mate is faithful to the Lord.

It is difficult for us who are "accustomed" to the Christian faith to realize the impact that this new doctrine had on the Roman world. Here was a teaching for every person, regardless of race or social status. The church was perhaps the only assembly in the Roman Empire where slaves and freemen, men and women, rich and poor, could fellowship on an equal basis (Gal. 3:28).

However, this new equality also brought with it some misunderstandings and problems; and some of these Paul dealt with in 1 Corinthians 7:17–24.

The principle that Paul laid down was this: Even though Christians are all one in Christ, each believer should remain in the same calling he was in when the Lord saved him. Jewish believers should not try to become Gentiles (by erasing the physical mark of the covenant), and Gentiles should not try to become Jews (by being circumcised). Slaves should not demand freedom from their Christian masters, just because of their equality in Christ. However, Paul did advise Christian slaves to secure their freedom if at all possible, probably by purchase. This same principle would apply to Christians married to unsaved mates.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 591–592.

## **Explore:**

Some people think Paul is unfair to women. He tells men it's better to be single. He tells wives to give in to their husbands. But to sum up his teaching like this is unfair to Paul.

Paul is writing to Christians who are living in a society that abuses and debases sex. In Corinth a woman can be used as a sex slave or trapped in a loveless marriage. Naturally, the Christians wonder whether sex is dirty, and marriage is second-best.

Into this confusion, Paul brings a sexual revolution. He teaches men to give themselves for their wives. No Greek or Roman had ever heard of such a thing! He teaches wives that they have the same rights and duties in marriage as their husbands. What a liberation for pagan wives! They have been treated as part of their husband's property; now they are released into equal status and mutual love.

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 580–581.

**Explore:**

7:20–23 Paul again states the remain-as-you-are principle and illustrates it with a choice faced by slaves: to willingly remain a slave or to seek freedom. The apostle did not condemn slaves to a life of permanent slavery. By all means take the opportunity to become free if it presents itself, he said. But on the other hand, the fact of being a slave should not be a concern. His logic is thus: whether a Christian was free or a slave when he came to Christ, he owes lifetime obligations to the same master, Jesus Christ. In Roman parlance, a freedman was an emancipated slave, whereas a free man was one who had never been enslaved.

F. Alan Tomlinson, "1 Corinthians," in Holman Illustrated Bible Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and Jeremy Royal Howard (Broadman & Holman, 2015), 1237.

**Explore:**

7:18 Paul deals with the subject of racial ties in verses 18 and 19. If a man was a Jew at the time of his conversion, and bore in his body the mark of circumcision, he need not take a violent revulsion at this and seek to obliterate all physical marks of his former way of life. Likewise, if a man were a heathen at the time of his new birth, he does not have to seek to hide his heathen background by taking on the marks of a Jew.

We might also interpret this verse to mean that if a Jew were converted, he should not be afraid to live on with his Jewish wife, or if a Gentile were converted he should not try to flee

from that background. These external differences are not what really count.

7:19 As far as the essence of Christianity is concerned, circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. What really counts is keeping the commandments of God. In other words, God is concerned with what is inward, not with what is outward. The relationships of life need not be violently forsaken by the entrance of Christianity. “Rather,” Kelly says, “by the Christian faith, the believer is raised to a position where he is superior to all circumstances.”

7:20 The general rule is that each one should remain with God in that state in which he was called. This, of course, only refers to callings that are not in themselves sinful. If a person were engaged in some wicked business at the time of conversion, he would be expected to leave it! But the apostle here is dealing

with things not wrong in themselves. This is proved in the following verses where the subject of slaves is discussed.

William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1768–1769.

### **Question 1 of 5**

If God is omniscient, why does He ask questions to people in the Bible?

### **Question 2 of 5**

Why do people find contentment in walking with and serving Christ?

### **Question 3 of 5**

Based on this definition, who is the most content person you know? What makes them this way?

### **Question 4 of 5**

Why can difficult circumstances be viewed as God's calling on our lives for that particular time?

### **Question 5 of 5**

How might we use even difficult circumstances as opportunities to serve and honor God?