

# Partnering for Maturity

---

Sunday, June 22, 2025

*Start with Application Testimony*

- **Last week's exhortation:** Submit your body to the Lord – just as you would your heart or your mind. Ask Him to show you how you might be misusing it, mistreating it, or letting it control you.

## INTRO

- **We are going verse-by-verse, in a topical study through I & II Corinthians**
  - **Current Topic:** Becoming Mature – The personal discipline of becoming like Jesus
    - Over the past few weeks, we've seen that spiritual maturity means saying no to sin and pursuing holiness, measuring ourselves by the standard of Christ's love, and being willing to lay down our rights for the sake of others and the gospel. We've learned that we're not self-made, but God-designed, with distinct roles that reflect His purpose. And we've been reminded that our bodies are sacred, made for relationship with the Lord and meant to bring Him honor.
    - Now as we study 1 Corinthians 7:1-16 we're going to see that whether you're married or single, God uses close, committed relationships to mature you – exposing your selfishness, shaping your faithfulness, and teaching you to love like He does.
    - **Note:** *Paul's instructions in this passage explicitly reference sexuality in a marriage, but we are going to see how the principles*

*apply more broadly in marriage, and even in other close relationships.*

## **READ**

### **1 Corinthians 7:1–16 CSB**

<sup>1</sup> Now in response to the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” <sup>2</sup> But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband. <sup>3</sup> A husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does. <sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another—except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control. <sup>6</sup> I say this as a concession, not as a command. <sup>7</sup> I wish that all people were as I am. But each has his own gift from God, one person has this gift, another has that. <sup>8</sup> I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they remain as I am. <sup>9</sup> But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, since it is better to marry than to burn with desire. <sup>10</sup> To the married I give this command—not I, but the Lord—a wife is not to leave her husband. <sup>11</sup> But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and a husband is not to divorce his wife. <sup>12</sup> But I (not the Lord) say to the rest: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce her husband. <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is made holy by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is

made holy by the husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. <sup>15</sup> But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace. <sup>16</sup> Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

## EXAMINE

### #1 | If you are married, your marriage is how God is maturing you

1. **God has a purpose in your marriage – it's not just to make you happy, it's to make you holy.**
  - a. All of the following are ways that marriage actually trains you to be more like Christ.
    - i. Consider that Jesus' relationship with His people is consistently pictured as a marriage relationship.
  - b. ***Marriage teaches you to prioritize the needs of the other person.***
    - i. 1 Corinthians 7:3 "A husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband."
      1. Marriage trains you to live by commitment, not mood – to put the other person first even when you don't feel like it.
  - c. ***Marriage reveals your selfishness.***
    - i. 1 Corinthians 7:4 "A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does."
      1. Nothing quite challenges our selfishness like what Paul says here.

2. Much of our selfishness flies under the radar – until we live with someone every day. Then it shows up fast.

d. ***Marriages teaches you to manage yourself.***

- i. 1 Corinthians 7:5 “Do not deprive one another—except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”
  1. You can’t say yes to everything or resist everything. Marriage teaches you to set limits and tell yourself no.
    - a. Working together, spouses can be very helpful in helping one another see these things in themselves.

e. ***Marriage teaches you to be faithful when it’s difficult.***

- i. 1 Corinthians 7:10–13 “...a wife is not to leave her husband. 11 But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and a husband is not to divorce his wife. 12 ...If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce her husband.”
  1. God shows us what faithfulness looks like – through hardship, pain, and even betrayal. Marriage gives us a chance to learn that kind of faithfulness firsthand.

f. ***Marriage teaches you to consider the effect of your presence.***

- i. 1 Corinthians 7:14 “For the unbelieving husband is made holy by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy by the husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.”

1. It's very easy to go through life rather oblivious to the effect that your presence has on other people.

a. But in marriage it is much more obvious because of the way that spouses' moods and attitudes influence one another.

b. What can be less obvious is the spiritual effects that spouses have on one another – which is what Paul is pointing out.

g. ***Marriage teaches you to trust God in the most intimate and difficult space of your life.***

i. 1 Corinthians 7:16 "Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife."

1. No relationship ties your life to another person like marriage – and with that closeness comes deep vulnerability, fear, and uncertainty.

a. This makes marriage the ultimate place to learn to trust God with the unknown.

## **#2 | If you're unmarried, God is using close relationships to mature you**

1. **Marriage isn't the only way God matures us**

a. Some people are called to singleness, which we will discuss in the next half of 1 Corinthians 7

2. **Whether you are single for now, or feel called to singleness permanently, this passage still helps you learn the kind of relationships you need in your life:**

- a. You need people you can't just walk away from – relationships that teach you to stay when it's hard.
- b. You need people who have permission to challenge you, humble you, and tell you the truth.
- c. You need to learn how to work in partnership – to give and take, not just get your way.
- d. You need people to help you set limits before you burn out trying to do everything yourself.
- e. You need another set of eyes – to see things differently and to see yourself more clearly.

## **REFLECT**

### ***Let's take a moment to pray***

Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight and draw our attention to what He wants us to see and understand today

## **APPLY**

### **Process the passage together with these questions:**

- What has marriage taught you about yourself? *(For those who are married to share with the group)*
- What does faithfulness look like when things get difficult? How is faithfulness in marriage about more than just staying together?
- What does it look like to practice faithfulness in non-romantic relationships?

- How does self-control affect your ability to love others well?

### **Where we want to “land the plane”**

- Spiritual maturity doesn't happen in isolation – it's forged in the hard, beautiful work of commitment. Whether through marriage or close relationships, God shapes us by calling us to stay, to serve, to listen, and to love. These relationships expose our selfishness and deepen our faithfulness. And through them, we learn to trust God in the places that matter most.

### **Exhortation for the Week**

- For the married, ask God to show you how He is using your marriage to mature you. For the unmarried, do the same with your close relationships – especially those where you are challenged the most.

## **FOOTNOTES**

### **1. Some in Corinth were trying to practice celibacy within marriage.**

Apparently this refraining from sex within marriage was a unilateral decision of one partner, not a mutually agreed-on decision (vv. 3–4). Such a practice sometimes led to immorality on the part of the other mate (v. 5b; cf. v. 2). Paul commanded that they stop this sort of thing unless three conditions were met: (a) The abstention from sexual intercourse was to be a matter of mutual consent on the part of both husband and wife. (b) They were to agree beforehand on a time period at the end of which normal intercourse would be resumed. (c) This refraining was to enable them to devote themselves to prayer in a concentrated way. *David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition*

*of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 517.

2. **“Not I but the Lord” and “But I, not the Lord”** Paul here is simply distinguishing between the teachings of Jesus Himself, and teachings that Paul was giving as an Apostle. This doesn’t invalidate Paul’s teaching or make it somehow optional, because in this case it was inspired by the Holy Spirit and authoritative. But for the Corinthian reader, Paul is simply pointing out when he is repeating the exact command of Jesus on that topic, and when he is speaking to a new issue. This comes up again later in verse 25.
3. **Notes on verses 10–16.** Paul’s direction to Christians married to one another was like that of Jesus Himself (Mark 10:2–12): as a rule, no divorce (cf. Matt. 5:32). The difference in language between separate (chōrīsthēnai) on the part of the wife (1 Cor. 7:10) and divorce (aphienai) on the part of the husband (v. 11) was probably due to stylistic variation as the word translated “separate” (chōrizō) was commonly used in the vernacular as a term for divorce (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*. 4th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 899). When problems occurred in a Christian marriage, the resolution was to be sought in reconciliation (cf. Eph. 4:32), not in divorce. The rest referred to Christians who were married to non-Christians. Jesus, in the course of His ministry, never had addressed this issue (cf. vv. 10, 25). But Paul, with no less authority (cf. v. 25) did. Some divorces may have been initiated because of the command of Ezra to the Israelites in Jerusalem after the Exile (Ezra 10:11) to divorce themselves from pagan spouses. Paul affirmed that the same principle should operate in a believer–unbeliever marriage as in a marriage of two Christians: as a rule,



no divorce. A Christian husband must not divorce (aphietō) an unbelieving wife, and a Christian wife must not divorce (aphietō) a non-Christian husband. Divorce was to be avoided because the Christian spouse was a channel of God's grace in the marriage. Within the "one flesh" relationship the blessing of God which came to the Christian affected the family as a whole (cf. Jacob in Laban's household [Gen. 30:27] and Joseph in Potiphar's [Gen. 39:5]; also cf. Rom. 11:16). It is in this sense that the unbelieving spouse was sanctified and the children were holy. However, there were exceptions to the rule of no divorce. If the unbeliever insisted on a divorce, he was not to be denied (the word trans. leaves is *chōrizetai*, the verb used in v. 10). Should this occur, the Christian was not bound to maintain the marriage but was free to marry again (cf. v. 39). Paul did not say, as he did in verse 11, that the Christian in this case should "remain unmarried." (However, some Bible students say that not being "bound" means the Christian is not obligated to prevent the divorce, but that it does not give freedom for remarriage.) The second part of this verse in which Paul affirmed that God had called Christians to live in peace could be understood as a separate sentence. The same conjunction (*de*, but) which introduced the exception at the beginning of this verse was repeated by Paul, probably to indicate another shift in thought and a return to the main point in this section, namely, the importance for the Christian spouse of preserving the marriage union and living "in peace" with the non-Christian. (For a similar digression in a discourse on the general rule of no divorce, see Matt. 19:9.) Paul's point was that a Christian should strive to preserve the union and to keep the peace, but with the understanding that marriage is a mutual not a unilateral relationship. Paul then stated a second (cf. v. 14) and crucial reason why a Christian should stay married to a non-Christian. God might use the

Christian mate as a channel of blessing (cf. v. 14), leading ultimately to the point where the unbelieving spouse would believe the message of the Cross and experience salvation (cf. 1 Peter 3:1–2). *David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 518–519.*