

## *Wise Words to Wives & Widows*

### **1 Corinthians 7:39-40**

**39** A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

**40** But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

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#### **Passage Summary:**

“Marriages are permanent, but they can be broken by the death of a spouse. Earlier Paul had advised widows to remain unmarried after their husbands died (7:8). But he also acknowledged that some would prefer a second marriage, and that too met with his approval. In this verse, Paul gives one additional caveat: If a widowed believer does remarry, the prospective husband should be a believer. . . .Note, too, that in contrast to the arranged marriages of virgins as discussed in vv. 36–38, the language Paul uses in this verse suggests that a widow had more freedom in deciding whom she was going to marry. For this reason, the apostle feels some advice in this regard is appropriate.

Paul cannot resist saying one more time, however, that in his humble opinion the widow would be more blessed if she remained single. He does not need to repeat his reasons, since he has stated them several times in different ways in the preceding verses.



Verbrugge, Verlyn D. 2008. "1 Corinthians." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans–Galatians (Revised Edition)*, edited by Tremper Longman III & Garland, David E., 11:328–29. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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## 1 Corinthians 7 Review:

- What have you learned about marriage from our study of 1 Corinthians 7?
  - ➡ What are some ways that this chapter's teaching on marriage goes against much of what our current culture says about marriage?
- What have you learned about singleness from this chapter?
- Is there any specific way in which you have been challenged in your thinking or in your marriage/singleness? How has the Lord grown you through this study?

### I. *The Obligation of Wives*

- In what sense is the wife *bound* in marriage?
- What are her *obligations* in marriage before the Lord?
  - ➡ What are the husband's obligations to his wife? **Cf. Titus 2:3-5, 1 Peter 3:1-5; Eph. 5:22-33**
- Paul says, "she is bound as long as her husband lives." What does this teach us about *the duration* of the marriage covenant?



- ➔ How can this help both married couples and singles to put marriage in proper perspective?

## II. *The Freedom of Widows*

- Paul speaks of the death of the husband using the word meaning “to sleep.” Why does Paul use this term?
  - ➔ See **1 Cor. 15: 6, 8, 16-18, \*20, 50-58**
  - ➔ How is this an encouragement to us in thinking about death?
- Paul says that the widow is “free to be married to whom she wishes.” How might this differ from a virgin daughter, like the one mentioned in verses **36-38**?
- What is the one *condition* which Paul places on the widow’s freedom?
  - ➔ Why is it both sinful and unwise for a believer to marry an unbeliever? What are some practical difficulties that will result from this?
  - ➔ Consider **2 Corinthians 6:14**:
    - What does it mean to be “bound together” with an unbeliever? Does marriage fit that description?
    - Consider also: **Deuteronomy 7:1-4; 1 Kings 11:3-5**



### III. *The Apostle's Wisdom*

➤ In v. 40, Paul gives his “opinion.” Does this mean that we should simply disregard the rest of the verse? Why or why not?

↳ Consider v. 40b, and also v. 25.

↳ Perhaps consider any one of the following verses on Apostolic authority:

■ 2 Cor. 13:10; 1 Thess. 4:2; Titus 2:15

➤ Why would Paul say that he thinks a widow would be *happier* without marrying again?

What reasons has he already given in **verses 25-28, 32-35**?

↳ What are some of the *advantages* of singleness?

➤ For what reasons should/would a widow decide to marry again? **(See verses 8-9, 39)**

#### *Prayer Topics:*

➤ Pray that God would **strengthen** and **protect** the marriages at ABC!

➤ Pray that God would **encourage** the singles at ABC in their service to Him!

