

1 Corinthians Chapter 7

- Paul has written to the church in Corinth about sexual immorality, church discipline, law suits and various difficult and important things, and he doesn't slow down much in terms of controversy or difficulty, or sensitive issues.
 - This chapter or portion of scripture is fairly unique in that Paul is now responding to questions posed to him from the Corinthians church, they're asking for more information.
 - It's important to understand what was going on in Corinth at that time:
 - Corinth was a sea port city, ships and men coming and going, a busy cross roads. Corinth was a very sensual city, very much given over to debauchery (excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures) - they were very promiscuous.
 - There used to be that saying that if a person lived a wild kind of life, of immorality and vice, that they lived like a "Corinthian."
 - In Corinth above the Acropolis or the citadel of the city was the great temple of Aphrodite. There were the temple courtesans or slaves, prostitutes basically, both men and women who would come down into the city at night to offer themselves in the service of Aphrodite. There was the constant invitation and availability of sexual immorality. These "courtesans" would then bring the proceeds of their activities back to the temple.
 - It was also at about the same time that the great persecution against the Church had begun under the Roman emperors. Christians were being put to death because of their faith in Jesus Christ, and their refusal to worship Caesar.
 - Dealing with heavy things, and in some cases things that have been engrained into the only culture they've ever known, then add to that the physical life and death issues related to their faith in Jesus.
 - Spiritual life and death, and physical life and death.
 - Paul starts off addressing Christians married to Christians, then in verse 12 he addresses believers married to non-believers.
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V: 1 Responding to their questions related somehow to marriage.

"It is good for a man not to touch a woman." - describing "celibacy" and or "abstinence" from any form of physical or intimate relationship.

- Literally meaning just what it says, not to touch in any form, no physical contact; here it is used as a euphemism indicating not to engage in sexual intercourse.
- Celibacy: the state of abstaining from marriage and sexual relations:
- Abstinence: the fact or practice of restraining oneself from indulging in something. In context, sexual relationships of any kind.
- Some years ago (mid 80's & 90's) as many of our schools were attempting to address the many underage un-wed mothers in our nations high schools the government developed various programs to try to reverse what was happening.
- Most of the programs centered on sex education, contraceptives, and birth control of various sorts. There were a few districts that focused on abstinence, not engaging in sexual behavior - which proved to be 100% effective when practiced.
- The abstinence programs were basically shouted down as being an intrusion of religion into public life and labeled as outdated, antiquated, and a even narrow minded approach to the problem.
- Paul is more or less saying if you don't play with fire you won't get burned!

V: 2 This verse makes it crystal clear that God does not approve of either polygamy or homosexual marriage.

- Nevertheless - to keep from sexual immorality, to keep from sinning it's acceptable for a man or woman to get married and to engage in the monogamous marriage relationship presumably keeping them from fulfilling that type of relationship outside of marriage.
- Bear in mind that God sanctioned, approved, arranged the first marriage - and he did so for good reason:

Genesis 2:18 "And the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

Proverbs 18:22 "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord."

Hebrews 13:4 "Marriage is honourable..."

- This issue isn't so much marriage, it's the pursuit of marriage!
- Hopefully when people get married it's for more than just to have a sexual partner.

- I ask people in pre-marital counseling why they want to get married and I've never had anyone just blurt out "I just want to have sex..."
- Because that is certainly not to be the basis for entering into a marriage - but it is at least one consideration amongst many.
- One of my favorite parts of the marriage vows is that:

"Marriage is commended in God's Word to be honorable among all men, and therefore is not to be undertaken or entered into unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly."

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 "3For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor."

- The general idea is simply to remain pure and to demonstrate self control. If as an example a young man will exercise self control and self denial in this area of his life, then that same discipline will flow into other part of his life, into his finances, into his work ethic and so on.
- There will be those times when you've got money in hand and the question is: do you buy diapers and baby food, or do you buy that new hunting rifle and a scope - self denial or self indulgence?

V: 3-5 Do not withhold the conjugal rights of the other, don't deprive each other of the sexual privileges of marriage. We don't have exclusive authority over our own bodies, we belong one to the other.

- Paul makes an exception for those times of mutual consent and the seeking of the Lord through fasting and prayer - but not to the point of provoking the other to sin or sexual immorality.

V: 6 Paul is stating that this is to be by permission or mutual agreement, not as a commandment to be imposed on the other spouse.

V: 7 Paul is more or less saying that - "I wish that you were celibate, like I am, but this is a gift."

- Some are called to it, some aren't. If you are, great! If you're not, then don't!

Jesus said:

Matthew 19:12 "For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

- Some have the gift, it's easy for them, other's don't have that gift, some are forced into it.
- Paul's ministry was such that it was better for him not to have a wife - it gave him great latitude in what he did. It also spared some poor woman from watching her husband get beaten, imprisoned, stoned, or suffer through the various deprivations associated with His ministry.

V: 8 This is not so much a prohibition against marriage if you're single or a widow, and I would assume a widower as well - don't try to change your status - but to focus more on the Lord and to let Him bring or not bring a spouse according to His will for each of us.

- Marriage isn't the issue as is the pursuit of marriage, the distraction of the pursuit.

Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

- Die to self, focus on the Lord, allow Him to do what He wills in His time.
- Adam was asleep to his needs, God allowed Him to see what His need was, then He put him to sleep. Then God brought just the right one to meet that need, in His time, in His way - that God would be glorified.

1 Timothy 6:6 "Now godliness with contentment is great gain."

V: 9 If you don't have the gift of celibacy, or self-control then get married. It's better to get married than to burn with passion.

- Given what Paul said in Ch. 6 about those who engage in sexual immorality of various sorts, I'm not sure if this "burning with passion" isn't a pun of sorts.

V: 10 Having addressed the singles and widows, and widowers - he turns to those who are already married - same thing: don't try to change your status - stay where or as you are.

"... A wife is not to depart or separate from her husband."

- Generally a wife shouldn't separate from her husband, or initiate divorce proceedings.
- There are circumstances wherein some husbands have driven their wives from their homes through domestic violence or other forms of abuse, but as a general rule wives shouldn't just pick up and leave their husbands.

V: 11 But if she does, it's not a free for all - she's to remain un-married or if possible be reconciled to her husband.

- There are other verses (**Matthew 5:31-32**, **Matthew 19:3-9**) that come into play regarding marriage and divorce, allowing that there are circumstances that would allow for divorce, speaking of adultery - but even then allowing for it, not necessarily mandating it.
- This verse draws a definite distinction between separation and divorce.

V: 11b *“And a husband is not to divorce his wife, or put away his wife, or leave his wife.”*

- God's intent for marriage was that it would be monogamous and that it would be for life.
- Jesus addressed the issues of marriage, divorce, and re-marriage - because the Jewish culture that He was addressing had so greatly confused and misrepresented it. They were marrying and divorcing indiscriminately, frivolously, flippantly so Jesus called them on it.
- In the Corinthian church they're just trying to get the basics down to something they can wrap their mind around, thus Paul's instruction to them. Paul is instructing them on what God's original intent for marriage was.
- That it would be monogamous and that it would be for life.

V: 12-13 But to the rest of the situation, Paul says this isn't "thus saith the Lord", "this is my take on it..."

- Bear in mind that Paul is being guided by the Holy Spirit to write what he's writing, and that he's also being guided by the Holy Spirit in his "opinion."
- Avoid divorce at all cost!
- It happens perhaps that after two non-believers get married, one of them comes to know the Lord - becoming un-equally yoked together.
- This isn't automatic justification for divorce.

V: 14 There are some who teach that all children if they die before the age of accountability go to heaven.

- We don't have any verses that tell us directly what happens in that scenario.

- This verse points out that either the believing wife or husband is a “sanctifying” covering to the non-believing spouse with regard to their children.
- Otherwise children from such a marriage would be “un-clean,” but because of that “sanctification” they are holy.
- Meaning holy and acceptable in His sight, un-clean would be just the opposite.
- God knows what is right and just - and that is what He does - whether we understand Him fully or not.
- This is addressing the issue of the child’s salvation, not the spouse.

1 Peter 3:1 “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives.”

V: 15 If the un-believing spouse in the marriage departs, abandon’s the believing spouse, then the un-believing spouse is not bound in marriage in this particular instance.

- The Apostle Paul may have experienced this himself. To be a Pharisee, as he at one time was, they were required to be married.
- It is presumed that once Paul became a flaming born again Christian that his wife divorced him. His family may even had has as the custom was and is, they may have had a funeral for him, considering him dead to them.
- So, no longer being bound - does that mean free to re-marry and so on? That depends on how you interpret this passage. Most interpret this passage to mean no longer bound by the marriage vow, or the law as it relates to marriage.
- From what we know, Paul didn’t seek re-marriage - being bound to Jesus.

“But God has called us to peace.”

- Certainly if possible peace between husband and wife, that is the context of this passage, and peace with our God.

Romans 12:18 “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”

V: 16 Still seemingly discouraging divorce in general, particularly the believing from the un-believing, Paul asks how do you know that your influence might be the

determining factor in their salvation through your witness - don't be hasty to throw that opportunity away.

V: 17 Essentially, what ever state you were in when you got saved, single, or married - just stay that way and keep walking with the Lord.

- As God has gifted you, walk in that gifting, single, married, trusting in the Lord no matter what.
- Paul will go into more detail on that as the chapter continues.

V: 18-19 From a physical standpoint it would be pretty tough for someone who had been circumcised to become "un-circumcised." So from a practical standpoint this passage isn't talking about literal physical circumcision.

- If when you were called by Christ you were circumcised, meaning you were Jewish, then don't try to be "un-circumcised" or be un-Jewish, don't try to become a Gentile. Likewise if you were un-circumcised, meaning a Gentile don't try to be circumcised or a Jew.
- Those things don't matter - obeying the Word of God, that is what matters.
- Some people think that when a Jewish person accepts the Lord that they need to abide by Gentile standards of living and worship and that is not true. Some expect that they'll turn around and start eating pork and forsake their Jewish heritage.
- While anyone, including a Jew who receives Jesus as their Lord and Savior is freed from the requirements of the Law - the religious requirements, Jewish believers are still Jews ethnically and culturally.
- There is nothing wrong with observing the various feasts or other aspects of Jewish life so long as their not looking to them, or the kosher laws, or whatever for salvation, knowing that their salvation is by their faith in Jesus. They don't need to become Gentiles.
- Likewise, even though there are aspects of Jewish life and culture that are appealing, especially if you have a Biblical world view, in the same manner Gentiles don't have to become Jews to receive or maintain their salvation. Jesus does all that for us.
- The real issue is simply being obedient to the Word of God, this is pleasing to God.

1 John 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome / grievous.”

V: 20 Let each person remain the same, or don't seek to change yourself, allow the Holy Spirit to bring whatever changes He wishes to develop.

V: 21-22 If you were a slave when you got saved, don't worry about it, if the opportunity for freedom presents itself then roll with it, but don't strive for it.

- Even as a “slave” you are a free in Christ Jesus, a “freedman.”

John 8:36 “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

- There is nothing more liberating than being set free from sin and death. Most people are enslaved by their sin, and the bad habits of life.
- Even those who are “free” when they received Christ willingly become bond servants of Christ, willing slaves.
- Slave: (G-1401) “Doulos” - A voluntary slave, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another, his will being altogether consumed in the will of the other.
- Some slaves are taken in war, some are born into slavery, some are bought or sold as such - and some volunteer.

V: 23-24 That reminder: (3rd time) whatever state we may have started out in, in either event - now we're slaves of Jesus Christ, and we were bought at a price, we're not our own.

1 Corinthians 6:20 “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's”

1 Peter 1:18-19 “¹⁸Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

- Again the encouragement not to strive to change our status, be content with whatever God would have you to do.

Colossians 3:22-24 “²²Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. ²³And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”

Galatians 1:10 “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”

V: 25 Moving on now from those that are married, to Jews & Gentiles, and from slaves or free men, to single believers.

- Virgins is simply a reference to an un-married woman, the expectation is that an un-married woman or man for that matter will be a virgin, having abstained from sexual activity.
- Paul admits that he doesn't have a direct commandment from the Lord, but he gives us his estimation of things, his conclusions based on what God has revealed to him.

V: 26 Given the “present distress” - most likely speaking of the persecution that was breaking out against the church, not just from the religious culture, but from the Roman government as well.

- The full weight and power of the Roman government was falling upon the church, and many were being imprisoned and killed in cruel and tortuous ways.
- Paul was suggesting that given that climate it might be a good thing not to have a wife and little ones suffering along with them, that being single would be advantageous in some respects.
- He'll explain more as we go on.

V: 27 Are you already married, don't seek to be single. Are you single, don't seek to be married.

Philippians 4:11 “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:”

V: 28 It's not a sin to get married, there is that freedom - but there are repercussions that Paul would protect or save them from, which he goes on to expound on.

- The possibility of facing martyrdom would be challenging to marriage.

Killing Christians: Vision of martyrdom, Jesus calling.

- Being married generally has it's challenges, and all the more so in that environment.

V: 29 “Time is short...” Paul thought that time was short back then - how much the more so now!

2 Peter 3:3-5 “³Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴and saying, “where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” ⁵For this they are willfully ignorant: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water...”

- Paul is exhorting the believer, in whatever state they are in to live wholly for the Lord.

V: 30-31 Because time is short, we don't have time to indulge ourselves in mourning, nor in rejoicing apart from the Lord, don't get caught up in materialism, the material distractions around us - basically describing keeping a light touch in this world, knowing that its really not our home.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 “³You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”

Hebrews 12:1-2 “¹Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

- The exhortation is to use whatever things we have in this world for God's glory, not as misusing it - for ourselves.
- Because this world is passing away sooner than anyone thinks.

1 John 2:15-17 “¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

- Poem by C.T. Stud / Pastor Chuck:

“We've only one life, twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.”

- David Cassidy - last four words spoken: “So much time wasted.”

V: 32 I don't want you to worry about those things.

Philippians 4:6-8 “⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.”

- As we do focus on the things of the Lord, life gets simpler, and we draw closer, and closer still.

V: 32-34 Single people have the opportunity to focus on the things of the Lord in a way that married couples, with the responsibilities of marriage and families can't.

- Paul does mention being holy both in body and in Spirit (34b) - which he already addressed in previous verses about being able to control yourself, or if not then get married.
- It seems that Paul is sort of advocating the single life if you can handle it - fewer distractions.
- One of the things I've noted about marriage in general, and my marriage specifically as it relates to being a distraction and all of that.
- There are times when my family life or aspects of being married do cause me to attend to the needs of my family over the needs of the ministry - but I can also tell you that I am a much better Christian man because of my wife. She's a great encouragement to me, she keeps me accountable, she's a great sounding board - and I know for a fact that I'm a better Christian because of her, and my kids as well.
- I believe that many of us would hold to that same testimony.

V: 35 As Paul is, sort of advocating the single life as opposed to the married life - he's doing so for our own benefit or profit, not to put a "leash" on us, other translations use "to cast a snare upon you," or my favorite "to put a noose" upon you.

- All this that they might be able to serve without distraction.

[Anna the prophetess is a good example of this:](#)

Luke 2:36-37 “³⁶Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”

- Anna didn't lament her single state, she embraced it.
- She saw the opportunity to serve the Lord without distraction.
- She didn't hang out in the Temple because she was miserable, on the contrary she hung out there serving the Lord with her life, because that was where the Lord met her, and met her needs, fulfilling her.
- As a result she was given the same revelation that Simeon was, recognizing, and getting to see the Messiah

V: 36-38 Some men have made vows of celibacy, some have walked in that for a season. Some have changed their minds - it's ok, better to marry than burn with passion.

- In the days of arranged marriages, this may speak of fathers allowing their daughters to get married - that this is ok if their daughters desire to be married.
- Whatever the Lord has called you to. He who gets married does well for himself, he who remains single does better. That is Paul's take on it.

V: 39 If they do get married, then they are bound by the law of marriage only to be released by the death of their spouse.

- If that is the case then they can marry whoever they wish “*only in the Lord.*”
- Meaning another believer, being equally yoked.

Paul later expounds on this:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 “¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said; “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” ¹⁷Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” ¹⁸I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”

V: 40 Paul restates his opinion that she'll be happier in the long run if she, the unmarried remains the way she is - according to his estimation in the Lord.

- He kind of tosses in that last little disclaimer, that even though this is his opinion on the subject, he's got the Spirit of God on his side so to speak.