

1 Corinthians

Wisdom & Unity

Meeting the demands of
Christian life and living



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Starting where
you are:

Any questions?



1 Corinthians 7:1-24 – Christians and Sexual Intimacy, pt. 1

In Chapter 7, Paul addresses thoughts held by believers in Corinth concerning sexual intimacy. Paul's writing suggests that believers in Corinth struggled to reconcile the reality of sexual intimacy and their Christianity. The result of Paul's address is the development of a sexual ethic for married and unmarried, widows and widowers, and saved and unsaved.

Specifically, when it comes to the issue of marriage/singleness, salvation does not compel either marriage or divorce. Paul's "stay as you are" counsel is provided as a two-part response—7:1-24 and 7:25-40.

Outline: Part 1 (7:1-24)

- Sexual intimacy and partnership (7:1-9)
- Gospel witness potential of marriage (7:10-16)
- Counsel for the called (7:17-24)

The Main Idea

“It is best for Christians to remain as they are when they come to Christ, but if they lack self-control, it is best to marry only Christians.”

- Joel C. Gregory. “1 Corinthians,” p. 484 in Matthew D. Kim & Scott M. Gibson (eds.) *The Big Idea Companion for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2021) pp. 482-488.

September 8, 2022

Sexual intimacy and partnership (7:1-9)

Views of sexual intimacy and sanctification led believers in Corinth to:

1. Abstain from sex, even in marriage.
2. Avoid marriage, even if not called to singleness.

In contrast, Paul encourages believers toward a different view of sexual intimacy and sanctification. As a partnership sexual intimacy can help:

- Resist sexual immorality (7:2)
- Provide mutual satisfaction (7:3)
- Instill accountability (7:4)
- Encourage discipline (7:5)

Sexual intimacy and partnership (7:1-9) cont'd.

Paul's preference

Paul's personal desire maintains a view of a gracious God.

- vs. 7 □ a response to having his own abstinence/ceibacy mistaken as the norm for believers to imitate. But what may be good for Paul may not be normative for anyone else.
- “If it were up to me...But, I know it depends on what God has gifted.”
 - An individual's giftedness (**karisma** - charisma) is the determining factor.
- vs. 8-9 □ a response to misunderstanding and misapplication of Paul's previous admonishments concerning sexual immorality (see 5:9-11).

Gospel witness potential of marriage (7:10-11)

Divine command for Christians who married prior to conversion

Paul reiterates what God established in creation (Gen 2:24) and what Jesus affirmed by way of commandment (Mt 5:31-32, 19:3-9; Mk 10:2-12; Lk 16:18; see also Deut 24:1-4).

Note: Roman law—the context for Paul's writing—permitted either the husband or the wife to initiate a divorce. In contrast, Hebrew law—the context for Deut 24—permitted only the husband to initiate a divorce.

Do you recognize the image of grace seen through the example of a reconciled couple?

September 8, 2022

Gospel witness potential of marriage (7:10-16)

Is marriage appropriate for Christians? To other Christians? To Unbelievers?

The married:

1. Married to a believer (10-11)
 - The Lord's command: do not divorce
 - Contingency: remain unmarried or reconcile
2. Married to an unbeliever (12-16)
 - Paul's command: do not divorce
 - Contingencies for a believing spouse
 - Allow for the potential of sanctifying grace
 - Accept the possibility of peace

September 8, 2022

Counsel for the Called (7:17-24)

7:17-20 □ Focus on God's gift(s) and one's particular "assignment" can satisfy the believer.

7:21-24 □ Faithfulness to one's calling and giftedness can survive one's lot/place in life.

- The issue is faithfulness, not slavery. To interpret Paul consenting to slavery is to misunderstand Paul's intention.
- A proper interpretation reveals Paul's reverence of God and his expectation of the end—the parousia.

Any Questions?



For next week:

- Pray about today's lesson**
- Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-40**



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