

**Text: 1 Cor 7.1-16**

As we move through Corinthians, we will keep our place by developing the broad outline we started with.

**I. Introduction (1.1-9)****II. Conditions reported to Paul (1.10-6.20)****A. Divisions in the church (1.10-4.21)**

<sup>1</sup> Cor 1.11 For I have been **informed** concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you.

The divisions reflected a worldly approach by the Corinthians, treating their leading teachers as competing philosophers, not recognizing they were their servants to lead them to Christ.

**B. Lack of discipline in the church (5.1-6.20)**

<sup>1</sup> Cor 5.1 ¶ It is actually **reported** that there is immorality among you...

1. The report of immorality in the church
2. The matter of lawsuits among Christians (1 Cor 6.1-11)
3. The matter of prostitution in the church (1 Cor 6.12-20)

**Today:** Section III, point 1.

**III. Questions asked of Paul (7.1-16.4)**

<sup>1</sup> Cor 7.1 ¶ Now concerning the things about which you wrote...

“The remainder of the body of this epistle deals with questions that the Corinthians had asked Paul in a letter. Paul introduced each of these with the phrase *peri de* (‘now concerning,’ 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).”<sup>1</sup>

**A. Questions about marriage (7.1-40)**

- a. On the state of marriage: How to conduct yourself in marriage (1-7)
- b. On the question of marriage: Legitimacy of choices (8-9)

<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 7.1.

c. On the question of divorce: No initiation by Christians (10-16)

## On the state of marriage: How to conduct yourself in marriage (1-7)

In the previous section, 6.12-20, what error had some Corinthians committed? **They were consorting with prostitutes, continuing a casual Greek view to marital relations**

What part of verse 1 sounds like a Corinthian slogan? **“it is good for a man not to touch a woman” — perhaps derived from earlier teaching from Paul referring to sexual relations outside of marriage**

What would this slogan mean in light of the context (vv. 3-5)? **It seems that some Corinthians advocated “celibacy within marriage” as more holy — exact opposite of the libertines in 6.12-20**

Notice the “balanced pairs” in vv. 2-4:

Each man have his wife ... each wife have her husband (2)

Husband must fulfill his duty ... likewise the wife to her husband (3)

Wife does not have authority, husband does ... husband does not have authority, wife does (4)

Each of these expressions teach the same thing. What is Paul’s teaching here? **Husbands and wives should have regular marital relationships, no celibacy in marriage**

When Paul says “because of immoralities” in v. 2, what is he trying to avoid? **Married people falling into the temptation of immorality outside marriage**

With the teaching “stop depriving one another” in v. 5, what does this imply about the way this question came about? **Likely it was only one member of a married couple who was insisting on celibacy, there was no mutual agreement**

Paul lays down three conditions for periods of celibacy within marriage in v. 5. What are they?

1. **Abstinence to be temporary**
2. **Agreement to be mutual**
3. **Resumption of normal relations planned**

In v. 6, Paul says he is offering a concession, but not a command. What is he referring to? **The allowance for a period of celibacy within marriage, no one need ever engage in it, but it is allowable in keeping with the three conditions**

What does verse 7 imply about Paul's marital status? **Paul was unmarried. (Some argue that Paul was a widower; others that he was never married. Regardless, it seems he was single during most of his ministry at least.)**

In allowing for a temporary celibacy within marriage, does Paul think unmarried (and therefore celibate) people were disadvantaged in any way? **(7) No, Paul sees advantages to singleness, but realizes that most men do not have the gift of singleness.**

Paul "realized, however, that marriage or remaining single was more than a matter of weighing alternative benefits; each was a **gift from God**. It is God who enables each Christian to be married or single (cf. Matt. 19:12)."<sup>2</sup>

Mt 19.12 "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are *also* eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept *it*."

### On the question of marriage: Legitimacy of choices (8-9)

Who is addressed in vv. 8-9? **The unmarried [virgins] and widows**

Paul here says the single state is good — what is the view that many people have of singleness? **They view it as a tragedy or abnormality**

Paul gives one way to tell if one has the gift of singleness. What is it? (9) **Whether one has sexual self-control**

<sup>2</sup> David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 518.

## On the question of divorce: No initiation by Christians (10-16)

“Paul’s advice to married Christians is summed up in verse 24 after he addressed, in turn, individual Christians married to one another (vv. 10–11), Christians married to non-Christians (vv. 12–16), and other external physical and vocational states for Christians (vv. 17–23).”<sup>3</sup>

What added weight does Paul give to his instructions in v. 10? **These are the Lord’s words, not just his**

What is the general rule for married Christians? (10-11) **No divorce, no remarriage if divorced, but reconciliation**

Who are “the rest” of v. 12? **Those married to unbelievers**

How are Christians married to unbelievers supposed to act in their marriage? (12-13) **They are to remain married, not to initiate a divorce simply because of the “religious differences”**

What reason does Paul give in v. 14? **The presence of a believer in the home “sanctifies” (sets apart) the home, bringing the gospel in where it would not be present if the believer departed**

What does Paul allow in v. 15? **If the unbeliever leaves, the believer is called to peace, and to allow the unbeliever to depart**

The question of v. 16 includes the effect of v. 14 and the peace of v. 15. What does Paul say could be the outcome of following the pattern of peace? **The unbeliever could come to salvation**

Throughout this section, Paul uses euphemisms to talk about “marital relations” (my euphemism!). What does this teach us about how to speak of matters like this? **To consider them sanctified, set apart, and not to profane our conversation even when necessarily discussing them.**

<sup>3</sup> Lowery, 518.