

Text: 1 Cor 7.10-24

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)**

¹ 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)

¹ 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)

III. Questions asked of Paul (7.1-16.4)

¹ 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)."¹

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)
- c. On the question of divorce: No initiation by Christians (10-16)
- d. Underlying principles in view of the question of divorce (17-24)

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

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.**

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).”²

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”**

Considering the context, the question about “it is better not to touch a woman” (verse 1), what could be going through the Corinthians minds as they considered divorcing an unbelieving spouse? **If marital relations are unholy, or at least unseemly, then wouldn’t they be doubly so if they continue in these relations with an unbelieving spouse?**

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**

² 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.

Underlying principles in view of the question of divorce (17-24)

Compare v. 17 and v. 24, what does the similarity of language teach you about this section of Scripture? **It is all one piece; each point supports the main point of “staying put” in the condition in which you are called. Technical term, *inclusio***

In v. 17 and v. 24, Paul states and repeats a general principle. What is it? **They shouldn’t try to change their social (marital) status just because of their conversion to Christ.**

When Paul says, “so I direct in all the churches,” what message is he giving the Corinthians? (Note: Paul uses this phrase four times in 1 Corinthians (4.17, here, 11.16, 14.33).) **Paul points out that it is the Corinthians who are deviating from the standard, not Paul or other churches.**

Paul uses two illustrations to make his point. The first has to do with circumcision (18-19).

“The idea of becoming uncircumcised after one has been circumcised seems strange, but some Jews actually did this to avoid being known as Jews when they participated in activities at the public gymnasiums. They underwent an operation that reversed their circumcision.”³

From this illustration, what is Paul’s point? (20) **Let every believer remain in the social state in which he is called — if he is a Jew, he is now a Jewish Christian; if he is a Gentile, he is now a Gentile Christian.**

What is more important than achieving an “acceptable” social status [whatever one things “acceptable” is]? (19) **Living according to God’s will.**

The second illustration is from slavery. The general principle is the same, except Paul says that if a Christian slave has the opportunity for freedom, he should take it. (21) What is Paul saying about whether a slave should remain in the state in which he was called? **Paul means that the focus of a believing slave’s life should be serving the Lord, not pursuing freedom, but if he can be free, go ahead. Paul may be heading off an objection to his general principle with this exception.**

³ Constable, *Expository Notes*, 1 Cor 7.18.

What does Paul mean as he wraps up the slave illustration in vv. 22-23? **He means that we must remember that whatever our social status, we are the Lord's servants, that is our focus.**

“In our day, upward mobility has become a god to many Christians, and its worship has polluted the church. We need to be content to serve the Lord, to live out our calling, whether in a mixed marriage, singleness, a white collar or blue collar job, or whatever socioeconomic condition we may occupy.

“In this section, Paul chose his examples from circumcision and uncircumcision, slavery and freedom. However the larger context of the chapter is singleness and marriage. His point was that those who were single, when God called them to follow Him, should be content to remain single, and that those who were married should stay married. Faithfulness to God or effectiveness for God do not require a change.”⁴

⁴ Constable, 1 Cor 7.24.