

The Corinthian Marriage

1 Corinthians 7:1-16

Good Morning.

A Biblical marriage is two people becoming one flesh, constantly growing and maturing in Christ, without selfishness.

It should be a mutually satisfying and growing experience.

Christian marriages are to **resemble** the relationship between Jesus and His Church; but it takes the Holy Spirit to accomplish

Please open your Bibles to *1 Corinthians 7* as we continue

Last time, we learned that if you are in a consistent lifestyle being ruled by the sins Paul had mentioned and you are not born again, you cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul tells us how we are made righteous at the end of *verse 11*

You were washed (by blood sacrifice of Jesus), but you were sanctified (set apart), but you were justified (found without sin) in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

The bottom line is that our body belongs to the Lord and we were also told that our body is the Temple of God.

Today, Paul will address some things on marriage to the Corinthian Church as he goes from telling us our bodies are to be used for the Glory of God, to speaking on Christian marriage.

I. Celibacy.

Read *1 Corinthians 7:1-2*

Notice how this chapter starts, Paul says, “*Concerning the things of which you wrote to me*”

It is important to remember there were no chapter breaks in the original writing of this letter and Paul just finished telling us how we are not our own and that we bought with a price

Wiersbe said, “*As you study 1 Corinthians 7, please keep in mind that Paul is **replying** to definite questions. He is not spelling out a complete “**theology of marriage**” in one chapter.*”

Paul gives a response to some specific questions from some people in the Church; unfortunately, we do not have the questions; but we can assume one of them was...

“Is a celibate person more spiritual than a married person?”

Sexual **immorality** was widespread in Corinth; remember we have previously learned about the major religion of the city that promoted prostitution.

There were 1,000 temple prostitutes of Aphrodite, as well as other out of control sexual immorality in the city; in fact to refer to a woman a “*Corinthian girl*” was to call her a prostitute.

Last week, we learned that there was a group of people in Corinth who claimed they could have sex outside of marriage with prostitutes without harming their walk with God.

Any sexual activity outside of a God-ordained marriage is always wrong.

But as a response to this sin within Corinth, some Christians began teaching; if you are a spiritual Christian there can be no sex even within a Biblical marriage.

The gift of celibacy is a wonderful gift; but not everybody has the gift of celibacy; nor is it a **commandment**.

The Lord created marital relations as sacred. These relations are an amazing gift that bonds two people; one man and one woman.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. NKJV

Christian, hear this: Honoring the marriage bed is a huge responsibility!

II. Marital affection.

Read ***1 Corinthians 7:3-6***

In the first century pagan culture, women were considered property and wives were for bearing a man's children.

Dr. Hammond, "*Despite the anti-Christian prejudice evident in much of the feminist movement; it is to the teachings and example of Jesus Christ that women owe most of their freedoms.*

The advent of Christianity raised the dignity, freedom and rights of women to levels never before known in any other culture.

Indeed, as one historian put it: 'The birth of Jesus was the turning point in the history of women.'"

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. NKJV

When we studied *Ephesians*, we read in *Ephesians 5:22, Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. NKJV*

Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" NKJV

There has been a lot of false teaching and abuse that has come from this passage because people fail to take it in context.

The Lord Himself made wives equal to their husbands; but, their calling is to be a helpmate and submit to his godly leadership.

The wife is equal, but with a different function.

I believe the reason the wife is addressed first in this passage, is because the husband is called to do the **impossible**; apart from power of the Holy Spirit, he cannot love as Christ loved!

Submission is never about power or abuse; Submission means "sub-mission."

There is a mission for the Christian marriage, and that mission is obeying and glorifying God, as we submit to each other!

Notice in *vs. 3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her*. Literally, it means "payment that is due".

Paul says we should not view our body as only belonging to us; 1st it belongs to the Lord, and then it belongs to our spouse.

Again, this is in no way advocating abuse, but rather, mutual submission to the Lord and to each other as servants of Christ together in marriage.

Each spouse in the marriage is to be mindful of the needs of the other; not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually also.

Some of these the Corinthians thought they were being spiritual or godly by remaining celibate even within marriage.

Wiersbe said, *“As in all things, the spiritual must govern the physical; for our bodies are God’s temples.”*

*“The husband and wife may abstain in order to devote their full interest to prayer and fasting; but they must not use this as an excuse for **prolonged** separation.”* (Wiersbe)

Paul is encouraging Christian partners to be “in tune” with each other in matters both spiritual and physical.”

There are also marriages that have certain physical limitations; so we are obviously not speaking of those situations.

But there is a time to abstain or **fast**, from marital relations for a time; and many people misunderstand what **fasting** is...

We are told in several places within scripture that there is a battle that happens between the flesh and the spirit.

Christians tend to get pushed around by our fleshly desires.

Our flesh is all about our natural physical cravings, which can become selfish and even destructive when left unchecked.

Our mind can overrule our body, and give us the capacity to meaningfully relate to others and the world, while our spirit communes directly with God.

As we *fast*, we deliberately deny the powerful bond our flesh has and strengthen our relationship with God.

Fasting is like turning the volume down of our flesh, and turning it up in the spirit.

We can *fast* from many things; not only food. Today we often hear of people *fasting* from Facebook and other social media; *fasting* from chocolate or sugar, or from television.

Denying the flesh and becoming more dependent upon the Lord is what **fasting** is all about.

So Paul instructs couples to meet each others' physical needs except when both parties agree to a time of *fasting* and prayer.

III. Paul was celibate at this time.

Read *1 Corinthians 7:7-9*

One of the mysteries of the Apostle Paul was his marital status. The question is, "*Was Paul ever married?*"

Paul's Jewish background required him to have been married.

Paul claimed he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee in *Acts 23*.

The emphasis that the Jews put on marriage as part of their law and tradition would certainly have been used against Paul in view of such statements if he had not been married.

Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin prior to conversion, and one of the qualifications was that a man must be married.

Here in *1 Corinthians* Paul is saying to the unmarried to continue in this state, even as he was, certainly seems to imply that he was unmarried at the time of this writing.

So the controversial question is, *“Where was Paul’s wife once he became a Christ follower?” Did she die, or did she leave Paul because he left the Jewish faith to follow Christ?*

We are not told what happened to Paul’s wife, but many times a Jewish person would be excommunicated for becoming a Christian and believing in Messiah.

Notice, *“Each one has his own gift from God”*

Being single was good for Paul, but he would not impose it on anyone else. Celibacy or marriage, are both gifts from the Lord.

*“Many find themselves in the “grass is **greener**” trap, with single people wishing they were married and married people wishing they were single. Each state is a gift from God.”* (Guzik)

If the husband and wife are both surrendered to the Lord, they will desire to please each other in the marriage relationship, and the marriage will be fulfilling for both people.

Before we move to the next point...realize, we live in a fallen world where sin, the flesh and the enemy all seek to destroy God's children and their freedom they have in Christ.

The Lord does not desire His children to live in the guilt of past mistakes including a divorce.

Divorce happens as much within the church as within the world; there is infidelity, abandonment, abuse, selfishness; on and on.

The prophet *Malachi* says God hates divorce and that is true; but God hates all sin; especially sin that harms His people.

I am not looking to excuse sin, but I also want people to get right with the Lord and hear what He says in His Word.

People get divorced for so many reasons; I am by no means going to be able to cover them in the next few minutes.

Divorce can be very painful and it's so important to be reminded that God is close to the **brokenhearted** and that includes you.

He loves you and wants to help you move out of the pit of despair and into His presence.

It takes time to heal from a divorce; but, God will give you the strength and power you need to overcome. Knowing God loves you and has a plan for good for your life can give you hope.

IV. Sticking power.

Read *1 Corinthians 7:10-16*

Someone has said, “*Getting married is a lot like starting a career, or entering a university degree program.*”

“*Marriage is relatively easy to begin, but it is almost guaranteed to be a challenge to stay with for the long term if neglected.*”

And the worst catastrophe would be that you stop trying.”

Marriage is tough work because you are taking two imperfect people, with all of their flaws and failures and asking them to share life together and put their spouses’ needs above their own.

Some of these new Christians in Corinth were saved, but were already married to unbelievers, prior to conversion.

The question from the new Christians was, “*Are we required to stay married to unsaved spouses, now that we are saved?*”

Some wondered if they be more spiritual as single; so they wondered if they should end their existing marriages to be holier

Paul answers from the heart of the Lord: absolutely not!

In fact, Paul says, if one were to depart from their spouse, they must either remain unmarried or be reconciled.

David Guzik said, “*A Christian couple may in fact separate for reasons that do not justify a Biblical divorce.*”

It may be because of a misguided sense of spirituality, it may be because of general unhappiness, or conflict, or abuse, or misery, addiction, or poverty.”

In that day it was not even necessary for a man to state a reason to divorce a woman. But this privilege was not given to the wife

The certificate of divorce could actually prove helpful to a wife whose husband wrongfully divorced her, allowing her to remarry and still be provided for.

Biblical reasons for divorce are abuse, adultery, or abandonment.

Then Paul turns his attention and gives a reason for a believer to stay with a non-believer; Christ’s witness for salvation.

Salvation does not nullify the marriage commitment; if anything, it should deepen the vows that were taken.

Wiersbe said, *“It is an act of disobedience for a Christian knowingly to marry an unsaved person.*

But if a person becomes a Christian after marriage, he should not use it as an excuse to end the marriage to avoid problems.”

*“In fact, Paul emphasized the fact that the Christian partner could have a spiritual **influence** on the unsaved mate”* Wiersbe

Verse 14 doesn’t teach an unsaved spouse is saved because their spouse is saved; the Lord has no grandchildren and a person must accept the free gift of Jesus for themselves to be saved.

Romans 10:9 if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. NKJV

To be saved, a person must hear the Gospel, realize they are a sinner who needs a Savior and then confess Jesus as Lord God.

And this verbal confession is backed up by ***belief*** which means; to believe yes, but it also means to place the full weight of your trust on the finished work on the work Jesus did on the cross.

Salvation is not found in our actions, good deeds, and works, but is rather found in the forgiveness and grace of God;

Salvation cannot be inherited through anyone except Jesus.

The believing spouse is to demonstrate a Christ like witness in the home and live Jesus out loud for the lost partner to show them what a true Christian looks like.

The same is true with the children of a marriage with one believer and one unbeliever; the Lord has no grandchildren and a person must accept the gift of Jesus for themselves to be saved

V. Practical application.

As Christ Followers: If you become intentional about dying to self and realizing you were bought with a costly price; we will start to view our relationships in a new way; including marriage.

Allow me to give four tips to help keep our marriage good and even try and reconcile a hurt marriage.

1. Don't try to **control** your spouse, but trust the Lord.

The first step to restoring your marriage is admitting you cannot manage your spouse or marital problems on your own.

Most of the time I have a hard enough time controlling myself; so I can't control someone else.

This means you must come to the point where you recognize your need for the Lord to intervene on your behalf.

2. **Pray** for Your Marriage

Begin to pray every day for your spouse; even if your spouse, will not pray with you.

Fear and unbelief causes us to believe our problems are too big for God; but the Lord can still move mountains.

Stormie Omartian's (o Mar te an) book, *The Power of a Praying Wife* says to pray "Lord, Lift us out of the pit of unforgiveness.

Speak through us so that our words reflect Your love, peace, and reconciliation. Tear down this wall between us and teach us how to walk through it.

Enable us to rise up from this paralysis and move into the healing and wholeness You have for us.”

My marriage is always better when I pray for and with my wife.

Prayer is your greatest and most powerful weapon in the struggle to maintain your marriage.

James 5:16 the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

James 5:18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. NKJV

3. **Grow** together in the Lord.

Successful Christian marriages are grounded in a Spirit-filled, worshipping community.

Without the instruction, encouragement, equipping, and accountability found in the fellowship of the Church, a Christian marriage will suffer.

Draw support from a church community and do Bible devotions together to help strengthen your marriage.

Identify people who care about you and your spouse and ask them to pray for you, and mentor you as you work to reconcile.

Accept help from family, friends, your church staff, and others for whatever you need.

Consider your spouse's needs and not only your needs.

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. NKJV

All humans have needs which include a need for attention, respect, appreciation, approval, physical touch, support, comfort, security, etc.,

What's important to your spouse is probably different than what's important to you.

People feel loved in different ways.

Learn your spouses' needs and love language and seek to meet each other's needs.

Success in love is not about waiting to act until you feel like loving your spouse.

Instead, even when you may not feel like it, when you reach out to your spouse with caring actions that meet his or her needs

It will trigger the feeling of love in your spouse, and hence a cycle of love, which of course is the opposite of the crazy cycle, the book Love and Respect speaks of.

The Crazy Cycle says without love, she reacts without respect. Without respect, he reacts without love. (Eggrichs)

4. Rebuild Friendship and **Trust**.

Trust is perhaps the most foundational ingredient in building an intimate relationship between husband and wife.

It takes a very short time to destroy trust and a much longer time to rebuild it.

Trust must be cultivated and nurtured. Rebuilding it requires that you consistently monitor your behavior, being very careful how you treat each other.

This is the key to building a strong relationship, and trust. If you want to restore your marriage you need the key!

An individual's trust in God is the single most important factor in how he or she recovers.

When trust is damaged, or destroyed, a person needs to be dependent and trusting on our Heavenly Father.

Trust in God will be the foundation upon which you begin to develop trust in your spouse.

Pray daily, and ask Him to help you see your spouse and your relationship through His eyes.

Ask the Lord for spiritual discernment and wisdom and it will be provided.

A Biblical marriage is two people becoming one flesh, constantly growing together; maturing in Christ and without selfishness.

It should be a mutually satisfying and growing experience.

Christian marriages are to **resemble** the relationship between Jesus and His Church;

It takes surrendering to the Holy Spirit to accomplish a healthy marriage or any other healthy relationship.