

# 1 Corinthians 7 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- [1 Corinthians 7:1](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:2](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:3](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:4](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:6](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:8](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:9](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:10](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:11](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:12](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:13](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:14](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:15](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:16](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:17](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:18](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:19](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:20](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:21](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:22](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:23](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:24](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:25](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:26](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:27](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:28](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:29](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:30](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:31](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:32](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:33](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:34](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:35](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:36](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:37](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:38](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:39](#)
- [1 Corinthians 7:40](#)

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1 CORINTHIANS - PROBLEMS OF A LOCAL CHURCH  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

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FROM CHART: Note 2 major divisions:

- **FIRST DIVISION** - Chapters 1-6 = Problems of Congregation - Divisions & Depravities,
- **SECOND DIVISION** - Chapters 7-16 = Personal Problems, Worship Problems

## 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Amplified NOW AS to the matters of which you wrote me. It is well [and by that I mean advantageous, expedient, profitable, and wholesome] for a man not to touch a woman [to cohabit with her] but to remain unmarried.

Wuest Now, with reference to the things concerning which you wrote. It is perfectly proper, honorable, morally befitting for a man to live in strict celibacy. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now with regard to the issues you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to live a celibate life.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:1 Περὶ δὲ τῶν ἡρώτων, καλὸν τῷ ἀνδρὶ μὴ ἅπτεσθαι.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:1 And concerning the things of which ye wrote to me: good it is for a man not to touch a woman,

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now in response to the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have relations with a woman."

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman."

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now in regard to the matters about which you wrote: "It is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman,"

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now for the questions about which you wrote. Yes, it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman;

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now, concerning the things that you wrote about: It's good for men not to get married.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:1 Now, as to the things in your letter to me: It is good for a man to have nothing to do with a woman.

- good: 1Co 7:8,26,27,37,38 Mt 19:10,11
- touch: Ge 20:6 Ru 2:9 Pr 6:29
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

1 Corinthians 7:1-40 can be somewhat difficult to follow as Paul addresses the questions of the Corinthians, so here are outlines to help

### John MacArthur's Outline

#### To Marry or Not to Marry (7:1–7)

1. CELIBACY IS GOOD 7:1
2. CELIBACY IS TEMPTING 7:2
3. CELIBACY IS WRONG FOR MARRIED PERSONS 7:3-5
4. CELIBACY IS A GIFT (7:6-7)

#### **Divine Guidelines for Marriage (7:8–16)**

1. GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIANS MARRIED TO OTHER CHRISTIANS (7:10-11)
2. GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIANS MARRIED TO UNBELIEVERS WHO WANT TO STAY MARRIED (7:12-14)
3. GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIANS MARRIED TO UNBELIEVERS WHO WANT TO LEAVE (7:15-16)

#### **Christians and Social Revolution (7:17–24)**

1. THE PRINCIPLE STATED (7:17–19)
2. THE PRINCIPLE REPEATED (7:20–24)

#### **Reasons for Remaining Single (7:25–40)**

1. THE PRESSURE OF THE SYSTEM (7:25–27)
2. THE PROBLEMS OF THE FLESH (7:28)
3. THE PASSING OF THE WORLD (7:29–31)
4. THE PREOCCUPATIONS OF MARRIAGE (7:32–35)
5. THE PROMISES OF FATHERS (7:36–38)
6. THE PERMANENCY OF MARRIAGE (7:39–40)

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#### **Simon Kistemaker Outline**

##### **Paul's Response to Corinthian Concerns 1 Cor 7:1–16:4**

- A. Marriage Problems 1 Cor 7:1–40
  1. Proper Conduct 1 Cor 7:1–7
  2. Faithfulness and Marriage 1 Cor 7:8–11
    - a. Unmarried and Widows 1 Cor 7:8–9
    - b. Married and Divorced 1 Cor 7:10–11
  3. Believer and Unbeliever 1 Cor 7:12–16
  4. A Digression 1 Cor 7:17–24
  5. Virgins and Marriage 1 Cor 7:25–40
    - a. Marital Status 1 Cor 7:25–28
    - b. Hardships 1 Cor 7:29–31
    - c. Marriage and Service 1 Cor 7:32–35
    - d. Engagement and Marriage 1 Cor 7:36–38
    - e. Marriage Vows 1 Cor 7:39–40

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#### **Wiersbe's Outline**

- I. Christians Married to Christians (1 Cor. 7:1–11)
  - II. Christians Married to Non-Christians (1 Cor. 7:12–24)
  - III. Unmarried Christians (1 Cor. 7:25–40)
    1. First, consider the present circumstances (vv. 25–31)
    2. Second, face the responsibilities honestly (vv. 32–35).
    3. Third, each situation is unique (vv. 36–38).
    4. Finally, remember that marriage is for life (vv. 39–40)
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**Introductory Note to Chapter 7** - This chapter has answers but we don't have the questions that they were asking Paul so one needs to be cautious examining this chapter. I agree wholeheartedly with [Utley's](#) comment that "It is very difficult to interpret this chapter without knowing exactly what questions the Corinthians asked and who asked them (the faithful believers, the libertine group, the ascetic group, or one of the factious house churches)." So keep this caveat in mind as you read the following comments (as well as links to sermons and other commentaries - this is not an easy chapter to interpret with "confident dogmatism!")

**Wiersbe** - As you read this chapter, keep in mind: (1) that Corinth was noted for its immorality and lack of standards for the home; (2) that Paul was dealing with local problems that we may not face in the same way today; (3) that it was a time of persecution for the Christians (v. 26). In this chapter, Paul discusses the problems of three groups of believers. I. The Unmarried Christians (7:1–9) II. Christians Married to Unsaved Partners (7:10–24) III. Parents of Marriageable Girls (7:25–40)

**Lowell Johnson** calls chapter 7 "THE HIGHWAY OF HELPFULNESS FOR THE SINGLE LIFE." Keep in mind that in chapter 7, Paul does not deal with the whole area of marriage – rather he deals only with the specific questions that they asked concerning marriages. Paul spends a great deal of time talking about the Single Life: Are you aware of the fact that one out of every three adults in the U.S. Are single?. Three groups make up this large number:. Those who have never been married. Those who are widows/widowers. Those who are divorced. Because we live in a "married oriented" society, many have a warped view of the single life.. Poor thing – they can't be happy single – Says who?. Or, if they never marry, there must be something wrong with with ... something happened in their childhood and that's the reason they never married ... or they must have had a bad experience in their date life and that's the reason they aren't married. I like what Barbara Sroka says: "One is a whole number." You do not have to be married to be a whole person. When two people get married, they are not two halves getting married, but they are two whole persons coming together to form one unit." There are many singles in the Bible who were greatly used of God:. John the Baptist. Martha, Mary Lazarus. Jesus was He unfulfilled? No! Was He incomplete? No! Remember the theme of this chapter: If you are single, don't live as if you are married. If you are married, don't live as if you are single.

**David Strain** - After having spent part of chapter 5 and the second half of chapter 6 dealing with sexual immorality in different ways, sex distorted and perverted by sin, Paul turns now in chapter 7 to give us a positive picture. So he's given us the negative picture with some important correctives; now he offers a positive picture. Here are sex and sexuality in the beauty of God's design. ([1 Corinthians 7:6-16 Rewire: Sexual Sanity](#))

**Ryrie** - In this chapter Paul is not writing a treatise on marriage but answering questions that had been sent to him. We have only one side of the correspondence. It is clear that Paul favored [celibacy](#) (1 Cor 7:1, 7, 8, 9, 27, 38), though he approved marriage (1 Cor 7:2, 27, 28). For more complete NT teaching concerning marriage, see John 2:1-11; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Ti 5:14; Heb. 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

**THOUGHT** - Given the fact that Paul frequently alludes to his preference for and the advantages of singleness (or celibacy) in Chapter 7, it is important to point out that despite the advantages of singleness (less concern for spouse and children, etc), Paul in no way is saying that the single/celibate person is **MORE SPIRITUAL**. That is a common misconception. Yes, a single person is able to devote more time, energy, and personal resources to ministry, but that in itself does not make them **MORE SPIRITUAL**. This caveat is given so that the young readers out there who feel a sense of being called to marriage, do not jettison their natural God given feelings and instead pursue singleness, for in fact in the absence of a "divine gift of celibacy" such a course could be very frustrating and even less spiritual than marriage. [Utley](#) has a good word on this topic writing "Paul addresses the theological topic of celibacy and the current setting of persecution. There is a spiritual gift of celibacy. It is not more spiritual than marriage. The single person is able to devote more time, energy, and personal resources to ministry. This is good, but not for all, not for the majority! Paul's real issue in this context is not singleness, but "stay as you are." The times were hard. Persecution was increasing. History tells us of three empire-wide famines during this period. Paul affirms marriage (cf. 6:16), but in the current social setting advocates singleness. This is not necessarily a universal principle, but a temporary, cultural admonition."

**Now concerning the things about which you wrote** - Paul is answering the questions the Corinthians asked in the letter they wrote him (1 Cor 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Here Paul is switching from the problems reported by Chloe's people (1 Cor 1:10–11) to issues/questions raised in a letter he had received from the saints at Corinth.

Phrase **Now concerning** in Bible (most by Paul and in this letter) - Ex 23:13; Deut. 4:32; 1 Co. 7:1; 1 Co. 7:25; 1 Co. 8:1; 1 Co. 12:1; 1 Co. 16:1. Each time he used this phrase to introduce a new topic.

**It is good for a man not to touch a woman**-The question this phrase raises is who said it, the Corinthians in their letter or Paul (who had the gift of celibacy [1 Cor 7:7] and who advocated that **unmarried and widows** stay as he was [1 Cor 7:8])?

If you are single, don't live as you are married.

If you are married, don't live as though you are single.

**Utley** on this first clause - The term “good” has a wide semantic field, but in this context it means “profitable” or “to one’s advantage” (cf. vv. 1, 8, 26). It is used in this same sense in the Septuagint in Genesis 2:18 (Then the LORD God said, “It is not good [[Lxx = kalos](#)] for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”). Paul’s whole concern is what is best for the individual in times of distress and what is best for the Kingdom of God. This may refer to (1) a quote from the letter that the Corinthians wrote to Paul; (2) a slogan of one of the factious groups; or (3) a phrase taken out of Paul’s preaching, but misinterpreted and applied in an ascetic, legalistic, or libertine way.

**NET, ESV, CSB, NRS** all put this statement in quotation marks (and NIV presents it as a quote from the Corinthians) indicating that they favor the interpretation that this was a statement actually made by the Corinthians in their letter to Paul. So many interpreters favor that this statement is apparently what the saints at Corinth had written to him. The implication is they felt that since sexual matters were so intimately linked with immoral behavior, perhaps the best course of action would be total abstinence.

Others like **John MacArthur** favor this as a statement made by Paul to explain “that it is [good](#) thing for Christians not to have sexual intercourse, that is, to be single, unmarried. He does not say, however, that singleness is the only good condition or that marriage is in any way wrong or inferior to singleness. He says only that singleness, as long as it is celibate, can be good.”

**Arnold** agrees with MacArthur writing “In essence, what Paul is saying is that it is good not to marry. The word [good](#)” can mean “honorable” so what Paul is saying is that it is honorable to stay unmarried that is, a person is not weird, abnormal or perverted if he or she does not marry. The single state is OK with God.” Later on in this chapter, he will give many reasons why it is a wise thing to stay single. The single state is [good](#). It does not make one morally or spiritually superior (**ED: AS SOME PEOPLE THINK AND SOME IN CORINTH MAY HAVE THOUGHT**). In fact, [celibacy](#) is the exception rather than the rule. While singlehood is [good](#), marriage is also [good](#). During the Middle Ages, [Monasticism](#) sprung up primarily to get so-called holy men and women separated from the world. Monks and nuns withdrew from all contact with the world (**ED: SEE “[Desert Fathers](#)” FROM ARTICLE “[CELIBACY](#)”**), viewing sex as defiling, dirty and unworthy. They viewed celibates as more spiritual than married people. These folks built monasteries, completely separating men and woman so as to remove all contact with the opposite sex and to reduce the struggle with sexual temptation. They probably used 1 Corinthians 7:1 as their chief proof text. But it did not work. [Monasticism](#) proved to be a disaster (SEE [What is the Christian view of asceticism / monasticism? | GotQuestions.org](#); SEE ALSO “[Christian monasticism before A D 451](#)”). Why? Because people cannot run away from the God-given sex drives within them. The vast majority of Christians in this world will marry and not stay single....We will learn in First Corinthians 7:7 that [celibacy](#) is a gift from God (**ED: [BUT SEE COMMENTS THERE](#)**) and only a few have this gift. While singlehood is the exception, marriage is the norm for most people. One cannot escape the problem of sex by disowning or ignoring the sex drives in the body. Furthermore, a person is not more spiritual when he or she pretends to ignore the body. To do that may expose one to even stronger temptations. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**Strain - Two Extremes** - Remember last time at the end of chapter 6, Paul addressed the problem of some of the members of the Corinthian church whose view of sex was so liberal and unconstrained they were actually visiting the temple prostitutes who plied their trade in that great pagan city. So there was a faction in the church at Corinth we might call “liber-teams.” And they had a slogan. You remember what it is – “All things are lawful for me.” That is what they were saying. “Anything goes.” And then there was another group who seemed to be in reaction to them, overreacting really. And they also have a slogan; you see it in verse 1 of our passage. They have swung all the way to the opposite extreme and so their slogan is, “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” It’s not a very catchy slogan, I’ll grant you. I can’t imagine it was all that popular as a catch phrase for their particular party, but nevertheless, that sums up their teaching. And so you see, don’t you, you see the two extremes. On the one side, there’s a kind of unguarded sexual promiscuity and on the other, there was a kind of prudish hostility towards sex altogether. They saw it as dirty and unworthy of a Christian and always to be avoided. ([1 Corinthians 7:6-16 Rewire: Sexual Sanity](#))

**Kistemaker** - Paul could not have advocated [celibacy](#) for everyone, for he would be contradicting God’s utterance: “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Ge 2:18).

**Gordon Fee** - “The idiom “**to touch a woman**” occurs nine times in Greek antiquity, ranging across six centuries and a variety of writers, and in every instance, without ambiguity it refers to having sexual intercourse” (NICNT-1 Cor).

**Utley** - Paul is not depreciating marriage or human sexuality, but humanity’s abuse of sexuality. Mankind always takes God’s gifts beyond God’s bounds. The social climate of Corinth was immoral to the extreme

The phrase **touch a woman** is not a gentle hug but a sensual hug (if you will), because the word means to fasten one’s self to or to cling to another person. In fact **Touch a woman** was a Jewish euphemism for sexual intercourse as described in Ge 20:6 when God said to Abimelech “I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you **touch** (Lxx = [haptomai](#)) her (Sarah, Abraham’s wife who out of fear lied and told Abimelech she was his sister - Ge 20:2).” **Boaz** protected Ruth telling her “I have commanded the

servants not to **touch** (Lxx = [haptomai](#)) you." (Ru 2:9+) In Pr 6:29+ Solomon wrote "So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever **touch**ed (Lxx = [haptomai](#)) her will not go unpunished. "

**Robertson** - One will get a one-sided view of Paul's teaching on marriage unless he keeps a proper perspective. One of the marks of certain heretics will be forbidding to marry (1 Tim. 4:3). Paul uses marriage as a metaphor of our relation to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:28–33). Paul is not here opposing marriage. He is only arguing that [celibacy](#) may be good in certain limitations.

As noted above the **ESV** puts quotes on "**It is good for a man not to touch a woman**" indicating the translators believe it was a statement made by the Corinthians, not by Paul. The **ESV Study Bible** note reflects this interpretation - "Some Corinthian Christians appear to have adopted the view that sexual relations of any kind, even within marriage, should be avoided. Paul seeks to carefully refute this view throughout this chapter (see 1 Cor 7:2, 5, 9, 10, 28, 36)."

**NET NOTE** on "it is good for a man not to touch a woman," is "a euphemism for sexual relations. This idiom occurs ten times in Greek literature, and all of the references except one appear to refer to sexual relations (cf., e.g., Josephus, Ant. 1.8.1 [1.163]; Gen 20:6 [LXX]; Prov 6:29 [LXX]). For discussion see G. D. Fee, First Corinthians (NICNT), 275. Many recent interpreters believe that here again (as in 6:12–13) Paul cites a slogan the Corinthians apparently used to justify their actions. If this is so, Paul agrees with the slogan in part, but corrects it in the following verses to show how the Corinthians misused the idea to justify abstinence within marriage (cf. 1 Cor 8:1, 4; 10:23).

**Good** (2570) ([kalos](#)) describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. **Kalos** is good with emphasis (as discussed below) on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable. In **classical Greek kalos** was originally used to describe that which outwardly beautiful. Other secular uses of **kalos** referred to the usefulness of something such as a **fair** haven, a **fair** wind or that which was auspicious such as sacrifices. **Kalos** referred to that which was "morally beautiful" or noble and hence virtue was called "the good" (to kalon). **Kalos** in the Corinthians letters - 1 Co. 5:6; 1 Co. 7:1; 1 Co. 7:8; 1 Co. 7:26; 1 Co. 9:15; 2 Co. 8:21; 2 Co 13:7

**Touch** (681) ([haptomai](#) the [middle voice](#) or [reflexive](#)) means to grasp, to lay hold of with the basic meaning of touching for the purpose of manipulating. **Hapto** conveys the sense handling of an object as to exert a modifying influence upon it or upon oneself. The majority of the 39 uses are in the Gospels and are associated with Jesus touching someone (or someone touching Him) usually with a beneficial effect. In contrast the use in 1Jn 5:18 speaks of touching with the intent of a negative or harmful effect (cp harmful sense in Lxx of Ge 26:11, Ex 19:12). Four uses refer to lighting a lamp (Lk 8:17, 11:33, 15:8) or kindling a fire (Acts 28:2). Paul uses it of touching a woman, apparently a euphemism for sexual contact (2Cor 7:1, cp Abimelech "**had not come near**" [Lxx = [haptomai](#)] Sarah - Ge 20:4,6; see [hapto](#) in Pr 6:29 = Whoever **touch**es her will not go unpunished. ).

**Utley** on **touch** - This term "**touch**" has many different connotations, "lay hands on," "handle," "control". It came to be used metaphorically of sexual contact (cf. LXX Gen. 20:6; Prov. 6:29; Josephus' Antiquities 1, 163 ("*And when they arrived in Egypt, it turned out for Habramos just as he had suspected. For his wife's beauty became well known, wherefor Pharaohes, the king of the Egyptians, not being content with what was said about her, but seized with zeal to behold her, was on the point of laying hands on Sarra.*"); Plato and Plutarch. See Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker's Lexicon, p. 102. It is not used in a sexual sense in the Koine Papyri from Egypt).

#### Related Resources:

- [G. D. Fee, "1 Corinthians 7:1 in the NIV," JETS 23 \(1980\): 307–14.](#)
- [Is it wrong for a married couple to have sex just for pleasure? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is New Monasticism? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Should a Christian be a monk? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Was the apostle Paul married? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Were any of the disciples married? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What constitutes marriage according to the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Question: [Was the apostle Paul married?](#)

Answer: The Bible never says whether Paul was married or not. Some think that he was at one time based on what he said in 1 Corinthians 9:5, "don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?" If Paul was married at one time, his wife likely passed away considering he never mentions her in any of his writings. Paul

declared that he had the gift of [celibacy](#) in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7.

Paul's statement to the unmarried and widows in the Corinthian church gives evidence that he was not married at the time of his writing the letter: "Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). Clearly, he was not married at that time, but whether he married afterward is also a matter of speculation.

Some believe that the apostle Paul was married because history tells us that a member of the Sanhedrin was required to be married. However, Paul never stated that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. He definitely seemed to be on the path, "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:14). However, Paul might not have advanced that far before he converted to Christ.

So, was the apostle Paul married? It is possible that he was at one time, but again, the Bible does not specifically say. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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### **Question: [What is the history and significance of the church in Corinth?](#)**

**Answer:** The city of Corinth was prominent in the first century. It is located in Greece on an isthmus between the Aegean and Ionian Seas, which guaranteed its importance both militarily and commercially. Corinth was the capital of the Roman province [Achaia](#). It was a prosperous city but also known for its immorality. Because of Corinth's sordid reputation, a new Greek word was coined, *korinthiazomai*, which meant "to live immorally like a Corinthian."

Acts 18:1-28+ tells of Paul's ministry in Corinth during his [second missionary journey](#). Paul came to Corinth from Athens, which was about 45 miles away. In Corinth he met [Aquila and Priscilla](#) and worked with them in the tentmaking trade. Paul used the income he earned to preach the gospel without relying upon support from others. Paul preached in the synagogue every Sabbath. When the Jews en masse would not respond, Paul decided to take the message to the Gentiles. His ministry resulted in the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, so the church in Corinth was made up of both. Paul ministered in Corinth for about a year and a half.

During Paul's time in Corinth, opposition against him began to grow. The unbelieving Jews in the city brought charges against Paul before the Roman proconsul, but he refused to get involved in a Jewish religious dispute. Paul stayed a bit longer but eventually moved on to Ephesus. Paul remained in contact with the Corinthian church through letters and personal emissaries, sending them warnings and instruction. The books of 1 and 2 Corinthians are just two of the letters that he sent to them to address issues and concerns.

Paul's letters to the Corinthians make up his largest body of work directed to an individual congregation. These two letters address problem areas that are still often problems in churches today.

The church at Corinth had divided loyalty to different leaders. Paul rejects this disunity, telling the church members to focus on Christ. The individual leaders should only point them to Christ. In conjunction with this, some people were questioning Paul's character and authority (1 Corinthians 1—4).

There was gross immorality in the Corinthian church, and it was being tolerated. Paul tells the church they must exercise church discipline (1 Corinthians 5—6). Also, believers were taking each other to court, and Paul says they should handle disagreements among themselves (1 Corinthians 6).

There was some confusion about whether or not it was better to be married or single, and how married people should relate to each other. Paul clarifies those issues for them and for the church today (1 Corinthians 7).

Because of the mixed background of the church in Corinth, food was an area of conflict and concern. Jews had strict dietary laws while Gentiles did not. How could they maintain table fellowship? Also, meat sold in the marketplace may have been sacrificed to an idol before being sold. Could a Christian eat that meat? And how should a Christian respond to a fellow believer who holds a different opinion? Paul says that the Christian is free to eat anything as long as he is not actively participating in idol worship. However, if one Christian's freedom causes spiritual harm to another believer by enticing him to do something against his conscience, Paul says the Christian should voluntarily curtail his freedom for the sake of his fellow Christian (1 Corinthians 8—10).

Paul also addresses the extent of women's involvement in worship services and deals with problems the Corinthians were having in their gatherings, including abuses of the Lord's Supper and their misuse of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 11—14). In the midst of all the confusion, love should be the guiding principle (1 Corinthians 13).

The Corinthians were also confused about the future resurrection. It seems that some of them were questioning whether or not those who had died in Christ would be raised bodily. Paul affirms that, just as Jesus rose bodily, so also will all believers (1



Corinthians 15).

Paul also gives the Corinthian church instructions on giving money to support ministry, and he enjoins the principle of “grace giving” vs. an obligation based on a set percentage (1 Corinthians 16).

In 2 Corinthians, Paul has to cover much of the same territory again. False teachers had followed Paul and tried to convince the Corinthians that he was not a legitimate apostle or that they, the false teachers, were much better than Paul. In his second epistle, Paul has to defend his calling and reiterate and expand upon his previous instructions, as well as correct the church’s misapplication of his previous letter.

The New Testament does not give us any further information about the church at Corinth; however, [Clement of Rome](#) wrote a letter to them, probably near the end of the first century (almost 50 years after Paul’s time ministering there), and he had to deal with some of the same issues again.

Over the years, the city of Corinth began to decline in size and influence. There is evidence of a continuing Christian presence in Corinth for centuries, but how biblical it was at any point in time is difficult to ascertain. In 1858, the ancient city of Corinth was completely destroyed by an earthquake. A new city was rebuilt. Today, the city of Corinth is officially under the Church of Greece (part of the [Greek Orthodox Church](#)) under the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. There is a small evangelical presence in Greece today, but it is often oppressed if not persecuted outright by the Greek Orthodox authorities.

In spite of all the problems the church at Corinth had, Paul refers to them as “those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people” (1 Corinthians 1:2). It would be easy to read 1 and 2 Corinthians smugly, given the multitude of their problems, yet the same problems present in Corinth are found in the church today. The church in the 21st century still needs 1 and 2 Corinthians to know how to deal with today’s issues. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### **Lowell Johnson - Some final Guidelines:**

##### A. It’s Better to Remain Single Than ...

1. To marry outside the Lord’s choosing. A non-Christian partner will always create relational problems.
2. To marry someone who will hinder our Christian growth.
3. To marry for the wrong motive.

Marrying for money, power, prestige, fear of growing old alone, or simply because it is expected will inevitable lead to disaster.

4. To marry without being willing to give ourselves to another completely. If we are unwilling to sacrifice our wants and needs for those of another every day for the rest of our lives, we shouldn’t even entertain the idea of marriage.

##### B. It’s Better to Marry If ...

1. Our lives would be more complete with a mate.
2. God leads us to someone we love and who loves us.
3. We are confident that our relationship will illustrate Christ’s love for His church.
4. We are willing to spend the remainder of our days giving more than receiving.

How can I find the right person? Before you find the right person, it is important to be the right person.

Today one out of every two marriages end in divorce. The sad thing is that the number of divorces is the same for both church goers and non-church goers. In 1980 one in three marriages ended in divorce. In 1980 Harvard University revealed an amazing statistic. They found when a couple was married in a church ceremony and they were both believers and they attended church on a regular basis, read the Bible together daily and prayed together daily, there was one divorce in 1,105 marriages. If we want to experience the kind of marriage God wants us to have, we must put forth the effort and work toward making our marriage what God wants it to be. Zig Zigler said, “If you treat your wife like a thoroughbred, you’ll never end up with a nag.” Two fellows were talking and one said, “My wife is an angel.” The other replied, “You are lucky, my wife is still living.” Guess which one had the best marriage. One young lady came to her pastor, asking why her prayers for a husband were not being answered. “Pastor,” she said, “I go to the altar every service and ask God to give me a husband. Why doesn’t God answer my prayers?” The pastor said, “It may be that you are praying selfishly. You are asking for yourself.” The next service, the girl went to the altar and was overheard praying, “God, please give my Mother a son-in-law.”

The word “touch” does not speak of the total absence of touch. Some have taught that a couple dating should never kiss or even



hold hands.

- The word speaks of "kindling a fire." It is used here to speak of a touch that arouses and stimulates, as an intimate contact that leads to sexual relations. It means that single men and women are not to go too far on dates or to co-habit with each other. There is to be no immoral sin between the singles of God's church. The touching that Paul speaks of is directly connected to the word "fornication" in verse 2.- In a nutshell, Paul is saying in verse 1 that all sex outside of marriage is prohibited, forbidden, and condemned by God. - Paul knows there are human desires and passions that can be inflamed and incited. Therefore, he says it is not good (pure, wholesome) to "touch" a person to satisfy those desires outside of marriage. Any sex before marriage is not acceptable to God. God commands purity before marriage and fidelity after marriage.

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### **Robert Morgan (From this Verse) - Staying Single**

In 1 Corinthians 7, the Bible recommends the single life, for unmarried people have more time for the Lord and fewer burdens to distract from His work. But it isn't an easy road, and remaining single requires special grace, as Amy Carmichael found out.

[Amy Wilson Carmichael](#) ([See another source](#) with excellent bibliography including online articles) (1867–1951) was born in Northern Ireland and educated in a Wesleyan Methodist boarding school. Having a heart for missions, she spent fifteen months in Japan, but suffered there physically and emotionally. She traveled on to Ceylon, then to England, then to India where she found her niche at last, working with girls whom she rescued from slavery and prostitution, raising them in her Dohnavur Fellowship. Her life touched thousands, her books have blessed millions, and her work remains to this day.

Like most young ladies, Amy, attractive and radiant, wanted to be married. But her great work would have been impossible as a married woman, and God gave her Psalm 34:22 as a special promise. Amy's struggle with this issue was deeply personal, one she was unable to share for more than forty years, when at last she said this to one of her "children" who was facing a similar dilemma:

On this day many years ago, I went away alone to a cave in the mountain called Arima. I had feelings of fear about the future. That is why I went there—to be alone with God. The devil kept on whispering, "It's all right now, but what about afterwards? You are going to be very lonely." And he painted pictures of loneliness—I can see them still. And I turned to my God in a kind of desperation and said, "Lord, what can I do? How can I go on to the end?" And He said, "None of them that trust in Me shall be desolate" (Psalm 34:22). That word has been with me ever since.

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### **Alan Redpath - THE SECRET OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1–22**

Here Paul begins to answer the questions the people at Corinth had written to him. He has devoted six chapters to dealing with the carnal conditions of the church there. He has laid down principles of actions by which to settle these things, and in every instance he has pointed them back again to the cross of Calvary.

They asked him four specific questions. Certain problems of marriage are dealt with in this chapter, and the following three chapters concern the meat sacrificed to idols. Then Paul has something to say about the place of women in the church, and finally, in chapter 11, he discusses the observance of the Lord's Supper. At the conclusion of that he says (I imagine with a sense of relief), "Now concerning spiritual things . . ." as if to deal with these matters had been a troublesome necessity. All the time he had been anxious to get to spiritual things.

In this passage on marriage some things that have a local background, and apply particularly to the situation at Corinth. But there are also some principles given here which are desperately needed in days like these.

There is language here which is found nowhere else in all the New Testament. For instance, Paul says, "I speak this by permission and not of commandment" (1 Cor 7:6); "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord" (1 Cor 7:10); "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord" (1 Cor 7:12); "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment" (1 Cor 7:25); "She is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 7:40).

He is clearly drawing a distinction between specific instruction which he has received from the Lord by the Holy Spirit and his own judgment in cases where he has received no such instructions. In other words, he is using his own judgment supported by what he believes to be the authority of the Holy Spirit. That does not invalidate this teaching in any way. It does, however, recognize that in matters concerning marriage there is no law so inclusive as to apply to every situation. Each case will call for the careful exercise of human judgment under the direction and authority of the Holy Spirit.

As a matter of act, Paul is using here the office of a scribe, who interpreted and applied the law. The Lord Jesus said concerning such men: "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man which is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew 13:52).

That is exactly what Paul is doing in this chapter. Remember, please, that he is doing it in the context of the situation at Corinth. For instance, the Gentiles of that time saw no evil whatever in multiplied wives; polygamy was the practice. And the Jews saw no evil in putting away their wives in certain circumstances. After they had returned from captivity in Babylon, many of them took wives of the people of the land, and Ezra commanded that they should put away their foreign wives. Some of the Jews who were converted to the Christian faith thought perhaps they should follow the same principle. Should they put away their unbelieving partner in marriage?

There is much local background, but there are also tremendous principles laid down here for the most sacred relationship in life. Let me ask you to notice, therefore, that Paul speaks first of marriage in its purity. He makes no attempt here to state the Christian doctrine of marriage in all its wonderful fullness; he does that in Ephesians and Colossians, comparing marriage to the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church.

At first sight, you would almost think Paul is advocating celibacy and undervaluing marriage. But in the context of the Corinthian church he is saying no such thing: their question was, in essence: "In view of all the immorality, impurity and unhappiness that is rampant in these days, isn't it safer to stay outside the marriage relationship altogether?"

Paul replies that it is good for a man not to be married, but he does not say it is better. In other words, celibacy is proper and good so long as such a person who is unmarried keeps himself pure; "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (7:9). For the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven and for the cause of the Christian faith, celibacy may be the high and holy calling of God to a man or to a woman.

The Lord Jesus had something very wonderful to say about this: "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matthew 19:10–12). Then in the next verse the Lord said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." How wonderfully the Lord links together the glory of men or women who, for the sake of the kingdom, have kept themselves single, and in the next moment He honors marriage and children.

As to marriage itself, Paul insists on monogamy: "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor 7:2). That is basic to the Christian faith. In that relationship, Paul tells us, there are sacred responsibilities where the conjugal rights of husband and wife are to be respected and honored. Christian marriage is not to be used as an excuse for lust and license, the satisfying of the flesh. He recognizes the intimacy of such a precious partnership when it is centered in the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the heart of these verses we find that in this relationship of Christian marriage there should be love, discipline, and mutual respect, the one for the other. There is a recognized admission of the rights of the wife and husband in the sexual relationship. Deep down at the bottom of it all, there are two lives united together in the Lord. This is what Paul has to say about the purity of the marriage tie.

In concluding his argument, Paul says that a man should abide in the calling to which God has called him (1 Cor 7:20). If a man, for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, determines that he will stand alone, and he believes that to be the calling of God, the evidence that he is not being peculiar or sanctimonious is that he will be given power from God to keep himself pure. But if he cannot do that, let him marry; let him not take a pious position and say, "For the gospel's sake, I am remaining single" and then live in sin. But marriage is not for license or self-indulgence. It is a holy, sacred relationship between man and woman which has to be kept disciplined in love, with mutual honor and respect, in the power of Christ.

Let me ask you again to consider with me, not only marriage in its purity but — oh, how important — marriage in its permanency: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Cor 7:10–11). In other words, Paul says there is to be no separation; or if there must be a separation, then there must be no remarriage.

Now this, of course, confirms the teaching of our Lord. When the Pharisees came to Him about this, they quoted the law of Moses as the basis of their authority: Moses suffered a bill of divorcement to be written in certain cases. The Lord replied that Moses did that because of their weakness and unbelief, but in the beginning it was not so. "God made them male and female, and for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh . . . what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4–8).

This relationship, which antedates both Christianity and the law of Moses, goes right back to the very beginning of creation as God's purpose for a man and a woman. There was to be only one exception to its permanency: infidelity within the marriage itself. The Lord Himself tells us that the very act of adultery breaks the sanctity of the tie (Matthew 5:32). Therefore there is only one ground for divorce.

I want to have respect for others who may think differently, but, in my judgment, the Bible teaches that the guilty party can never be remarried. Some of my brethren in the ministry (whose convictions I respect deeply, as I trust that they will respect mine) will not remarry either party. They say there is no such thing as divorce under any circumstances whatsoever. In the light of the

teaching of the Lord and also of Paul, and in the light of the circumstances of each case, I am happy to grant Christian marriage to the innocent party when a marriage has broken down through the adultery of the other party — and concerning which I am satisfied that he or she is the innocent party.

There may be circumstances, as 1 Cor 7:11 indicates, when the behavior of one party makes living together an impossibility. So often people come to my study and talk to me about these things, saying, for instance: "I just cannot go on any longer! My husband comes home drunk and beats me up. . . . How much longer must I live with that man?" Then I reply, "I think it would be well if you left him today."

Does that shock you? I have authority for it: "If she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Cor 7:11). There is no reason I can see why a woman should continue to live with a man who has become a drunken sot and whose behavior is making the home a hell on earth; but that is not divorce. Let the innocent person depart, but let her remain unmarried. And let her motive in leaving (as we have already studied in 1 Corinthians 5:5) be to deliver him to the devil for the destruction of the principle of the flesh and the saving of the soul.

God knows it will be with many a tear and heartache, if she has to take up her roots and leave the man who has treated her so badly. But her whole desire should be for the deliverance of her husband and for his salvation, that the home might yet be restored in the love of Christ. Just think of the confusion were such a person, having left her husband, to remarry, if perhaps years later the man is saved on skid row. He has the right to come back to the woman who has left him and ask her to take him back again. Although in certain circumstances it may be right for one party of a marriage to leave the other, that does not alter the great truth of the Word of God concerning the permanence of the marriage tie.

May I point out just one more thing in the latter part of the chapter: marriage in its power. What comfort these words bring to some who are suffering the awful heartbreak of an unequal yoke! And that is the issue here.

It is possible for a Christian so to forget his responsibilities to God and the commands of His Word that in a moment of excitement her or she is carried away and becomes linked to an unsaved person. That is, however, no ground for divorce. His part, rather, is to do everything he can to win his partner for the Lord Jesus, that, in spite of his sin and disobedience, God may have mercy upon him and extend that mercy to the person to whom he is married. Again, if one party to the marriage is converted after the wedding, both of them being unbelievers when they were married, what mutual understanding and love is necessary! "The woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him" (1 Cor 7:13).

Perhaps you have just been saved, and you are the first one in your family to become a Christian, your partner being still unconverted. Be careful how you treat him (or her), won't you? Don't nag at him; don't drive religion down his throat and give him a miserable time because you are saved and he isn't. Be patient and tolerant, although the change in your life may make him absolutely furious with you. If you long to see your loved one converted, then be grateful to God for His mercy in your own soul, and pray with all your heart that you may so live in patient love with your husband (or wife) that the very difference in your life may attract him or her to the Lord Jesus.

A colleague of mine in the ministry had just that experience. When his wife was converted, he thought that was just one more burden to an already energy-consuming business career. His wife had gone off her head religiously! Then he discovered within a matter of a few months that she had become so much more patient and gentle, kind and loving. He said to himself, "She has something that I must have," and he found the Savior too.

That's the way! Thank God for His mercy, and pray that your life-partner may share it. Be infinitely patient and forbearing, but raise the Christian standard high, even though in so doing it makes your husband or wife angrier than ever. If since your conversion God has spoken to you about drinking, gambling, dancing, shows, or other things, and you feel that you cannot now go to these places, your unsaved mate may say in disgust, "If you don't come with me, I'll go out with another woman (or man)." Then you know the sword in your own soul, but the only way to see him saved is to be true to the Lord, no matter what it costs.

Stay together, says Paul in 1 Cor 7:14, because by your conversion the whole family has been brought onto praying ground; "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy." As a child of God, you are His vantage point to reach them, and it is not God's will that one of them should perish. I believe that if one party is saved after marriage, that person has every right to claim the salvation of the whole household, even though it takes years.

But if, in spite of everything, the unbeliever goes, then you must let him go. If he does depart, you have no right to be remarried,

unless in his departure he himself commits adultery. But if the unbelieving partner of a marriage leaves because he or she cannot stand the testimony of the other, then let him (or her) go, even though it breaks your heart. But you have no right to be remarried; yours is the right to pray that even in his departure he might be brought to know the Lord Jesus, "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (7:16). If you hold on and pray and believe, you may see God answer prayer exceedingly abundantly above all you can ask or think!

What is the principle behind the power in marriage? It is summed up in the last little phrase in verse 24, "Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." This reinforces what is said in verse 20: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." If God calls a man or woman to remain single, he will give grace for it. If God calls to the married life, and that involves hardship, or maybe a divided home, or even suffering, He will give grace for that too.

The one whose family life is an example to others is to be respected. The one who remains for the Kingdom's sake is to be respected. The one who suffers the cruel misunderstanding of an unbelieving partner is to be respected, also. In every instance we are to abide in our calling: submitting to the will of God, depending upon the grace of God, making every effort to bring glory to God, striving to be approved by Him, always bearing in mind that one day we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (The Road to Heaven - 1 Corinthians Commentary)

**1 Corinthians 7:2 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.**

Amplified But because of the temptation to impurity and to avoid immorality, let each [man] have his own wife and let each [woman] have her own husband.

Wuest But because of the fornications, let each man be having his own wife, and let each woman be having her own husband. , and the other, on the other hand, in another way. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

NET 1 Corinthians 7:2 But because of immoralities, each man should have relations with his own wife and each woman with her own husband.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:2 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:2 But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:2 δι δ τ ς πορνε ας καστος τ ν αυτο γυνακα χ τω κα κ στη τ ν διον νδρα χ τω.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:2 and because of the whoredom let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her proper husband;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:2 But, because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:2 But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:2 But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:2 but because of cases of immorality every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:2 yet to avoid immorality every man should have his own wife and every woman her own husband.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:2 But in order to avoid sexual sins, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:2 But because of the desires of the flesh, let every man have his wife, and every woman her husband.

- **because of immoralities:** 1Co 7:9 6:18 Pr 5:18,19 1Ti 4:3
- **let:** Pr 18:22 Pr 19:14 Mal 2:14 Eph 5:28,33
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Timothy 4:3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

Hebrews 13:4+ Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage* bed is to be undefiled ([amiantos](#)); for fornicators ( [pornos](#)) and adulterers ([moichos](#)) God will judge (See 1 Cor 6:9-10+, Gal 5:19-21+, 1 Th 4:6+)

Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the LORD.

Proverbs 19:14 House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD.

## CONJUGAL RELATIONS COMMANDED

[David Strain](#) refers to these passages as Paul's teaching on "**Sex as Defense**."

[Utley](#) - Paul's concern in v. 2 is the pervasive immorality of first century Greco-Roman culture. In a promiscuous society, faithful, monogamous marriage is far better spiritually, emotionally, and physically than pagan worship. Not only is marriage advocated, but the proper responsibility of each partner is affirmed.

**But** - Or "nevertheless" (KJV) shows Paul is giving a contrast with the statement favoring not touching a woman (regardless of whether it was a statement made by the Corinthians as what they felt should be practiced in marriage or whether it was a statement by Paul that "celibacy" was a good thing).

For example **Guzik** says verse 1 "was probably a statement made by the Corinthian Christians, which they asked Paul to agree with. Paul will agree with the statement, but with reservation—the "nevertheless" (KJV)."

**Because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife and each woman is to have her own husband - Amplified** - "because of the temptation to impurity and to avoid immorality" The problem is **immoralities** ([porneia](#)) and it is notable that it is in the plural which signifies that there were various types of immorality commonly in "vogue" in Corinth (see list in 1 Cor 6:9+). **Immoralities** in the plural might also convey the thought that one episode of immorality will lead to other immoralities (and it is certainly true that sin tends to perpetuate more sin!) One other thought is that the plural conveys the sense that many of the saints at Corinth had problems with sexual immorality. In context however, Paul is specifically speaking to the danger of singleness to be tempted to commit immorality because they did not have a normal God-ordained "outlet" as did married persons. The verbs **have...have** are euphemisms for sexual relations (cf Mk 6:18; Jn 4:18; 1Co 5:1; 7:29)

Notice also in using **each** and **own**, Paul is clearly affirming [monogamy](#) and excluding polygamy, for as the **ESVSB** says " a "shared" husband would not be "her own" husband."

The two uses of **have** are both in the [present imperative](#) calling for continual obedience (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)). **Have** of course is a euphemistic (Greek idiomatic) way of saying they are to enjoy physical intimacy with one another (and no one else).

**Craig Keener** - Jewish people saw married sexual intimacy as the best deterrent to sexual immorality, and Paul here agrees (see also Prov 5:19–20). (IVPBBCNT)

Paul speaks of marriage in only positive terms in Eph. 5:22–33; 1 Ti 3:2 and condemns forbidding marriage 1 Ti 4:3.

**Jack Arnold** - While [celibacy](#) is not wrong, the Apostle Paul stresses that in the sex-oriented culture of Corinth, where temptations abounded, marriage is necessary for most people. All kinds of sexual immoralities, both heterosexual and homosexual, existed in Corinth. Paul was for maintaining sexual purity, so he suggests the way to prevent premarital and extra-marital sex is to get married

and have a normal, healthy and stable sex life. To put it in our vernacular, Paul is saying the way to keep unmarried people from having affairs and the married from cheating on their spouses is to marry and have a healthy sex life. It does help to be married in any sex-oriented society. Just to avoid sexual immorality seems like a low motive for marriage. However, this is not the only reason for marriage. It is to be entered into for many reasons. First, it is to share life with a partner in a lifelong commitment to serve God together. Second, it is to cultivate mutual love. According to Genesis 2:18-25, Adam and Eve were enjoying sex long before there was any sin in this world and before there were any children. God designed sex to bring mutual pleasure to His married creatures and to produce the highest kind of love between two people. The Bible affirms over and over again that sex is good, right, pure and holy because God thought it up. The sex drive is normal within every man or woman and it is nothing to be ashamed of as God's creatures. This sex drive is to be controlled outside of marriage, and to be released within marriage with God's full approval. There is nothing two married people can do in private, under the approving eye of God, which is sinful as long as any act does not become morally offensive to one partner or the other. God fully intended the saved to have more fun with sex in marriage than the unsaved can have anywhere else. Third, God gave sex to reproduce the human race and to establish the family which is the basic unit of life. Fourth, God gave sex to prevent sexual immorality. This does not suggest we should only get married to get release from sex drives, but this is one of the reasons. However, even marriage does not take away all sex drives and desire for the opposite sex, but it does take off the pressure. Even in marriage couples must deal with attractions, fantasies and infatuations about other men and women. When this happens, we have a spiritual problem which must be dealt with honestly before God and our mate. The Apostle Paul gives some advice on sex in marriage which is quite explicit. Some have wondered where Paul received this knowledge because at the time of this writing he was a single man. There is some evidence that Paul was probably married at one time in his life. It was a stigma for young Jewish men not to marry. Jewish tradition said, "A Jew who has no wife is not a man" (Gen. 5:2; Yehamoth, f. 63,1). Furthermore, Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin at one time. We know this because he tells us he cast his vote against the Christians (Acts 26:10). To be a member of the Sanhedrin required one be married. What happened to Paul's wife is not known. She may have died or she may have deserted because of Paul's strong Christian beliefs. Whatever, Paul knew from experience what a healthy sex life meant to a marriage. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**David Strain** - The lifelong union of one man and one woman in marriage, Paul says, is the only appropriate venue and context for sexual intimacy. And within that context, God has ordained that sexual intimacy should strengthen and protect each partner from the temptations of the Devil who twists and distorts sex into something selfish and perverse and shameful. Now let's face it, as we said, sex is the great spiritual battleground of our age. Wouldn't you agree with that? It is one of Satan's favorite avenues of attack. I dare say he has a very high success rate ensnaring many, even those who profess to follow Jesus, with sexual sin. And so Paul is saying that a healthy sexual intimacy within marriage is a vital defense ordained by God against Satan's attacks.....A healthy sex life within a loving, Christian marriage is part of a Christian's armor in the spiritual war against the enemy of our souls; a battle in which we are engaged every day. Sex as defense.

**William MacDonald** - For **each man to have his own wife** means [monogamous marriage](#). Verse 2 establishes the principle that God's order for His own people continues to be what it always was, namely, that a person should have only one spouse.

**Arnold** has additional comments on **Each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband**. - This is God's way to prevent premarital and extra-marital sexual relationships. Notice carefully each person is to have his own wife or husband not someone else's wife or husband. This teaches indirectly several concepts:

**1) No Polygamy.** This is a command; therefore Paul is forbidding the plurality of husbands and wives. In the Roman world, a wife was chattel, a work horse. Generally a man had several wives—one had charge of the kitchen, another of the living area and perhaps another was in charge of the clothing. Apart from having children with his wives, the man generally went to a prostitute for pleasurable sex. Paul commands a man and a woman to have one wife or husband who is loved. Christ lifted the state of womanhood to that of a partner in love with a man.

**2) Monogamy.** Paul teaches one man for one woman because that is God's ideal as set forth in the life of Adam and Eve. Monogamy produces the highest love between two married people because God has ordained it. Sexual satisfaction is not found with many partners but with one. Many affairs before marriage, wife swapping or adulterous relationships never satisfy. Why? Only monogamy produces the highest form of sexual love, and only Christians can reach the apex of sexual fulfillment. Sex is a physical and animal act. This is the lowest form of sex. Many people are just one step above an animal in their sex lives. Sex is also an emotional act, involving the whole man, and this is why some non-Christians can reach high levels of sexual love in a monogamous relationship. Sex is also a spiritual act therefore only Christians who are filled with the Spirit can reach the highest forms of sexual satisfaction. This happens because Christians see sex from God's perspective, and this frees men and women to enjoy the act without guilt or fear. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))



**NET NOTE** on **have** - Greek “each man should have his own wife.” **‘Have’** in this context means “have marital relations with” (see the following verse). The verb *echetō*, “**have**” occurs twice in the Greek text, but has not been repeated in the translation for stylistic reasons. This verb occurs 8 times in the LXX (Exod 2:1; Deut 28:30; 2 Chr 11:21; 1 Esd 9:12, 18; Tob 3:8; Isa 13:16; 54:1) with the meaning “have sexual relations with,” and 9 times elsewhere in the NT with the same meaning (Matt 20:23; 22:28; Mark 6:18; 12:33; Luke 20:28; John 4:18 [twice]; 1 Cor 5:1; 7:29).

**MacArthur** - Scripture gives numerous reasons for marriage. First, marriage is for procreation. God commanded Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). God intends for mankind to reproduce itself. Marriage is also for pleasure. Proverbs speaks of a man’s being “exhilarated always” with the wife of his youth (Pr 5:18–19), and the Song of Solomon centers around the physical attractions and pleasures of marital love. Marriage is a partnership. Woman was created for man to be “a helper suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). Friendship between husband and wife is one of the key ingredients of a good marriage. Marriage is a picture of the church. Husbands are to have authority over and to love their wives as Christ has authority over and loves the church (Eph. 5:23–32). And marriage is for purity. It protects from **sexual immorality** by meeting the need for physical fulfillment. Although **celibacy** is good, it is **not superior to marriage**, and it has dangers and temptations that marriage does not have.

**Immoralities** (4202) (**porneia** from root verb **pernao** = to sell, **porneuo** = to play the harlot; **pornos** = male prostitute) originally referred to any excessive behavior or lack of restraint. **Porneia** originally was used especially to describe the practice of consorting with prostitutes (**porneis** = “prostitute”) and eventually came to mean “habitual immorality.” **Porneia** in the Scripture describes any illicit sexual activity outside of the divine bounds established by marriage and thus includes the ideas of unlawful sexual intercourse, unchastity and fornication (including but not limited to adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, and prostitution). As an aside, while **porneia** refers primarily to sins of the flesh, those sins can never be divorced from the sins of the mind or heart, because all sin is related. Sin in one area always makes us more susceptible to sin in other areas. Nowhere does Scripture sanction the commitment of any form of extramarital sexual activity, a far cry from our modern American culture! Sex was often linked to pagan religious practices (both male and female prostitutes), with the idolatrous worship of false gods (idolatry and immorality are commonly described together in the Bible). **Porneia** gives us our English word pornography. **Porneia** is the opposite of the Greek word **enkrateia/egkrateia** (literally “holding oneself in”), which usually referred to sexual self-control (see Acts 24:25+)

**Porneia** is found in 24v in NT - fornication(4), fornications(2), immoralities(1), immorality(16), sexual immorality(1), unchastity(1). Matt. 5:32; Matt. 15:19; Matt. 19:9; Mk. 7:21; Jn. 8:41; Acts 15:20; Acts 15:29; Acts 21:25; 1 Co. 5:1; 1 Co. 6:13; 1 Co. 6:18; 1 Co. 7:2; 2 Co. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3; Rev. 2:21; Rev. 9:21; Rev. 14:8; Rev. 17:2; Rev. 17:4; Rev. 18:3; Rev. 19:2

**Each man** (everyone)(1538) **hekastos** from *hekas* = separate) means each, every one, of any number separately. There are 2 main uses - (1) *Hekastos* is used as an adjective qualifying a noun = each, every (Lk 6:44, Mt 16:27 = repay every man, Mt 26:22 = each one; Jn 19:23 - every soldier; Lk 4:40 = each one; Lk 16:5, Acts 2:3 = rested on each one; Acts 20:31; 1 Cor 12:18; Eph 4:7, 16, Col. 4:6; 1 Th. 2:11; 2 Th. 1:3); (2) *Hekastos* is used substantively which means it functions as a noun (or as a distributive pronoun) = each one, every one (Mt 18:35, Mt 25:15, Mk. 13:34 = each one; Acts 4:35; Ro 2:6 = each person; Gal. 6:4 = each one; Phil 2:4; Heb 8:11 everyone...everyone;) Louw Nida - “each one of a totality in a distributive sense”

**Hekastos** in the Corinthian letters (note 5 uses in chapter 7) - 1 Co. 1:12; 1 Co. 3:5; 1 Co. 3:8; 1 Co. 3:10; 1 Co. 3:13; 1 Co. 4:5; 1 Co. 7:2; 1 Co. 7:7; 1 Co. 7:17; 1 Co. 7:20; 1 Co. 7:24; 1 Co. 11:21; 1 Co. 12:7; 1 Co. 12:11; 1 Co. 12:18; 1 Co. 14:26; 1 Co. 15:23; 1 Co. 15:38; 1 Co. 16:2; 2 Co. 5:10; 2 Co. 9:7

#### Related Resources:

- [Does the Bible truly teach monogamy / monogamous relationships? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why did God allow polygamy / bigamy in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Lowell Johnson** (sermon in 90's) - America now has more than two and a half million unmarried couples living together. That's a million more than in 1980. U.S. News and World Report, October 23, 1995, stated that about 30% of teens have had sex by age 15. - Pregnancy is the leading reason young girls drop out of high school. In our country one million teenage girls become pregnant every year.

#### 1. Marriage is for Procreation

God told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). God intends for us to raise up godly



children and train them up in the ways of the Lord.

## 2. Marriage is for Pleasure

In verse 3 we're told that God intends married couples to maintain regular sexual activity.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled."

Proverbs 15:18-19 says we are to be "enraptured" with the love of our mates.

## 3. Marriage is for Partnership

Woman was created as a "helper" for man (Genesis 2:18). Friendship is the key ingredient for a good marriage.

## 4. Marriage is for Purity

It protects us from "sexual immorality" by giving us a wholesome outlet for sexual desires.

### CULTURAL CONTEXT: Four Types of Marital Relationships in Ancient Rome

- See John MacArthur's sermon [To Marry or Not to Marry](#) for more discussion of the four types of marriage (the following summary is taken from Wikipedia).

(1) [contubernium](#) - A *contubernium* was a quasi-marital relationship between a free citizen and a slave or between two slaves in ancient Rome. A slave involved in such relationship was called *contubernalis*.

(2) [usus](#) - by *usus* (habitual cohabitation) A *cum manu* acquired by *usus* was simply the [cohabitation](#) of the husband and wife for the duration of a year,<sup>[3]</sup> after which [ownership](#) of the wife was transferred to her partner and she was considered taken by the [decree](#) of yearly possession. This process required no [ceremonial](#) practices.<sup>[11]</sup>

(3) [coemptio in manum](#) - The matrimonial process of *coemptio*, in essence a [notional](#) sale of the woman to the husband,<sup>[3][7]</sup> could be transacted at any point during the marriage.<sup>[10]</sup> The transaction was conducted by a [scales](#)-holder in the presence of at least five [witnesses](#), all of whom were adult male [Roman citizens](#).<sup>[10]</sup>

(4) [confarreatio](#), - In [ancient Rome](#), *confarreatio* was a traditional [patrician](#) form of [marriage](#).<sup>[1]</sup> The ceremony involved the bride and bridegroom sharing a cake of [spelt](#), in [Latin](#) *far* or *panis farreus*,<sup>[2]</sup> hence the rite's name. The [Flamen Dialis](#) and [Pontifex Maximus](#) presided over the [wedding](#), and ten witnesses had to be present.<sup>[2]</sup> The woman passed directly from the hand (*manus*) of her father or head of household (the [paterfamilias](#)) to that of her new husband.<sup>[3]</sup>

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## Robert Munger - Fulfilling Sexual Desires

Since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:2

Sexual desire is God-given and, in its proper place, healthy and good. In conjunction with other reasons, such as love and the desire for companionship, the desire for sexual fulfillment is a strong and natural motivation for marriage. Love that produces the desire in a man and a woman to commit to a lifelong relationship also generates the desire to express that love sexually. But by itself, the desire for sex is a poor and shallow reason for getting married.

Believers who are serious about their commitment to Christ will seek to fulfill their sexual needs and desires in a godly way. Marriage is the God-ordained vehicle for fulfilling God-given sexual desire.

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1 Corinthians 7:3 The husband must **fulfill** his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

Amplified The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights (goodwill, kindness, and what is due her as his wife), and likewise the wife to her husband.

Wuest Let the husband be rendering to his wife that which is due her, and also let the wife render to her husband that which is due him. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:3 A husband should give to his wife her sexual rights, and likewise a wife to her husband.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:3 The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:3 The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:3 τ γυναικ ῶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὀφείλει ὡς ὁ κύριος ἡ ἐκκλησία, ἡ ἑαυτῆς ἑαυτῆς σώσει.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:3 to the wife let the husband the due benevolence render, and in like manner also the wife to the husband;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife her due: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:3 A husband should fulfill his marital responsibility to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:3 The husband should fulfill his duty toward his wife, and likewise the wife toward her husband.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:3 The husband must give to his wife what she has a right to expect, and so too the wife to her husband.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:3 Husbands and wives should satisfy each other's sexual needs.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:3 Let the husband give to the wife what is right; and let the wife do the same to the husband.

- Ex 21:10 1Pe 3:7
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Phil 2:3+ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

### MARITAL SEXUAL RELATIONS: A "DUAL DUTY/DEBT"

**William MacDonald** - Note the delicacy Paul uses on this topic. There is no coarseness or vulgarity. How different from the world!

**The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife - Amplified** - "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights (goodwill, kindness, and what is due her as his wife)" The word **must** literally referred to a debt of goods or money (Mt 18:32) and here figuratively refers to the husband's obligation to have sexual relations with his wife. See [note below](#) on statements from an Jewish

writings. Paul gives the husband (and by implication the wife) a command **fulfill** in **present imperative**, one which he was continually obligated to **fulfill**! As [David Strain](#) points out Paul's teaching "flies directly in the face of Jewish tradition and Greco-Roman culture in those days that privileged the husband's rights above the wife's every single time. But Paul starts here, doesn't he, by affirming the woman's rights and he commands (**fulfill**) husbands to respect those rights. "

**Moody Bible Commentary** - **Fulfill** his duty to his wife (v. 3) is remarkable because in that culture sexual satisfaction was considered the man's prerogative, not the woman's. But Paul insisted that each partner be available to the other, and neither was entitled consistently to deprive the other of conjugal rights (v. 4).

[Utley](#) points out that "Paul gives four guidelines in two verses (2 commands **have** in v2 and **fulfill** in v3). It is just possible that Paul is dealing with two problems in this area of human sexuality. (1) promiscuous Christians who continued their previous pagan sexual patterns (**libertines**) (2) Christians who have made even married sex a spiritual taboo **ascetics**, cf. some were "depriving" the spouse - 1 Cor 7:5)

**Arnold** - The husband owes his wife a debt, not only to love her as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, but to fulfill his sexual duty to her. A husband has a duty to meet his wife's sexual needs. To do this, he must spend time with her; he must communicate with her; he must listen to her, and he must provide security for her. A woman's sex life is tied up with her psychic, and her needs must first be met on a caring and understanding level before she can respond and find fulfillment in the sex act.

**Fulfill** (591) **apodidomi** from **apó** = from + **didomi** = give and so to "give off" from one's self) literally means to give back, then to put away by giving and then in a more figurative sense to pay back or recompense. **Apodidomi** can mean to give back or pay back implying a debt and conveying the idea of obligation and responsibility for something that is not optional.

**Duty** (3782) (**opheilē** from **opheleo** = conveys the basic meaning of owing a debt or having a strong obligation - moral obligation and personal duty; **opheiletēs**) means that which is owed, a debt. **Opheile** is a specific ("applied") indebtedness, looking to the implied (applied) obligation due to the debt (what is owed). **TDNT** - This word is common in the papyri for financial debts. In the NT it is used for debts in Mt. 18:32, for taxes and obligations (e.g., honor) in Ro. 13:7, and for the mutual obligations of spouses in 1 Cor. 7:3. **Friberg** - debt; literally, a debt of goods or money (Mt 18.32); figuratively obligation, duty; plural, of taxes dues (Ro 13.7); as a euphemism for sexual intercourse that becomes a duty after a marriage vow what should be done, conjugal duty (1Co 7.3+) Used 3x in the NT - Matt. 18:32; Rom. 13:7; 1 Co. 7:3+

**And likewise also the wife to her husband** - The wife was also under Paul's command to continually fulfill her obligation or expectation to her husband

**THOUGHT** - Now that is really very important to get clear. Paul places the obligation upon us to think of the rights of the other rather (cf Php 2:3-4+) than to stand upon our own perceived rights and make demands of the other...In premarital counseling I'll often talk with young couples about the four fault lines that tend to run through most marriages...money, sex, in-laws, and children. Over and over again, they become points of friction and tension in marriage. And Paul here is helping us understand why sex and sexuality might be one of those major points of friction. **When one partner demands his or her rights at the expense of the other partner's rights**, pain, grief, tension, distance intrudes upon the relationship. But Paul gives absolutely no quarter to that kind of behavior here. Instead, he is saying our attitude should be one of service. We are to serve our partner; to give to them for their sake rather than demand what we believe is our due. ([David Strain](#))

**Arnold** - The wife owes her husband a debt, not only to submit to him as the Lord Jesus has commanded her but to fulfill his sexual needs. A wife has a duty to meet her husband's sexual needs. To do this she must psychologically prepare herself, set times in her busy schedule for it, not become overly tired, and give attention to her husband over her children. When a man does not have his sexual needs met, he becomes a "bear" to live with, and when his sex needs are met, it is like a tranquilizer to him and he becomes a teddy bear. Sex is not only an exciting experience to be entered into when one feels like it, but it is a moral obligation. Marital infidelity can be overcome when husbands and wives recognize marriage is a contract in which husband and wife owe it to each other to be sexually responsible. Calling marriage a contract may not be very romantic, but that is how the Scriptures look at it. Sex is a duty and it is as much a Christian duty as reading the Bible, praying or witnessing. To fail to pay a sexual debt to our partner is sin. Infidelity takes many forms. Everybody harps on the adultery angle of unfaithfulness, but there is also **non-adulterous infidelity** which undermines a marriage. Men or women who play the game of "freeze out" with their partners are guilty of the worst kind of immorality. They do not realize the meeting of the sex need in their partner is a moral obligation. Those who do not fulfill this responsibility are guilty of non-adulterous unfaithfulness....Christian love is as much a matter of the mind and will as of the emotions. For one partner to turn away the other simply complicates the problem. To ignore one another drives a deep wedge between husband and wife. There are, however, legitimate times to go without sex such as when one is sick, during a woman's

period, a few weeks before a baby is due and a six weeks after a baby has arrived. The sexual aspect of marriage is vitally linked up with our spiritual war with the Lord Jesus. A husband or wife's happiness in his or her sex life has a great affect on the spiritual life. Healthy married love is essential for a happy home.

**Blomberg** - "It (sex) is something each partner 'owes' to the other. So it should never be used as a bribe or reward for good behavior or as something to be withheld as a threat or punishment. Husband and wife alike must be sensitive to the emotional and physical states of each other and not insist on sex on demand. But neither should one partner consistently try to get out of satisfying his or her spouse's conjugal needs (NIV Application Commentary - 1 Corinthians).

**Craig Keener** - Jewish marriage contracts stipulated a number of duties for the husband and a number for the wife; one major duty required of the husband was intercourse. Paul views intercourse as a mutual obligation (IVPBBCNT)

**NET NOTE on fulfill his duty** - Grk "fulfill the obligation" or "pay the debt," referring to the fulfillment of sexual needs within marriage.

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## TODAY IN THE WORD

1 Corinthians 7:3; Song of Solomon 2:1-7

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. - 1 Corinthians 7:3

The British mathematician Charles Babbage wrote to Alfred Tennyson complaining that two lines from his poem "The Vision of Sin" were inaccurate. The lines went, "Every moment dies a man / Every moment one is born." Babbage argued that if this were true, world population would never change. Instead, he wrote, the lines ought to read: "Every moment dies a man / Every moment one and one-sixteenth is born."

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## EVERLASTING KISS?

Husbands and wives who kiss daily before leaving the house usually live five years longer than those who don't. They have fewer car accidents, lose nearly 50 percent less time at work because of illness, and earn 20 to 30 percent more money than non-kissers. "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, . . . likewise . . . the wife to her husband" (1 Corinthians 7:3). (ED: ONE HAS TO BELIEVE SIMILAR TRUTHS APPLY TO THOSE WHO "KISS THE SON" [Ps 2:12KJV] SO TO SPEAK IN THEIR MORNING DEVOTIONAL!)

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## TWO PLUS ONE EQUALS ONE 1 CORINTHIANS 7:3

No other institution has been pushed, pulled, probed and prodded over the centuries like the institution of marriage. And yet it has never grown obsolete, because it is not merely a good idea—it is God's idea.

Martin Luther, a husband and father of six, considered marriage to be a school of character building. Listen as he extols the high calling of holy matrimony:

## WALK WITH MARTIN LUTHER

"Married life is no jest or to be taken lightly, but it is an excellent thing and a matter of divine seriousness.

"For it is of the highest importance to God that people be raised who may serve the Lord and promote knowledge of him through godly living and virtue, in order to fight against wickedness and the devil.

"I have always taught that marriage should not be despised, but that it be regarded according to God's Word, by which it is adorned and sanctified.

"Therefore it is not a peculiar estate [condition], but the most common and noblest estate, which pervades all Christendom, and even extends through all the world."

## WALK CLOSER TO GOD

For two to become truly one, there must be a third: God—the one who designed marriage in the first place.

And he has authored the most successful marriage manual of all time. That "manual," of course, is the Bible. But do you know what it says in such important chapters as 1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5, and 1 Peter 3? If not, it's time to find out.

After all, who should know more about helping your marriage to succeed than the one who performed the first wedding—and blessed it with his benediction (see Genesis 1:28)! (NIV Once a Day Walk With Jesus)

**1 Corinthians 7:4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.**

Amplified For the wife does not have [exclusive] authority and control over her own body, but the husband [has his rights]; likewise also the husband does not have [exclusive] authority and control over his body, but the wife [has her rights].

Wuest The wife does not have authority over her own body, but her husband does. Likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:4 It is not the wife who has the rights to her own body, but the husband. In the same way, it is not the husband who has the rights to his own body, but the wife.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:4 The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:4 The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:4 γυν το δ ου σ ματος ο κ ξουσι ζει λλ ν ρ, μο ως δ κα ν ρ το δ ου σ ματος ο κ ξουσι ζει λλ γυν .

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:4 the wife over her own body hath not authority, but the husband; and, in like manner also, the husband over his own body hath not authority, but the wife.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:4 The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:4 A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:4 A wife does not have authority over her own body, but rather her husband, and similarly a husband does not have authority over his own body, but rather his wife.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and in the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:4 A wife doesn't have authority over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband doesn't have authority over his own body, but his wife does.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:4 The wife has not power over her body, but the husband; and in the same way the husband has not power over his body, but the wife.

- Ho 3:3 Mt 19:9 Mk 10:11,12
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Ephesians 5:22-23, 25, 28-30+ Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.... 25 Husbands, **love** ([present imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,...28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but

nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body.

Colossians 3:18-19+ Wives, **be subject** ([present imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, **love** ([present imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) your wives and **do not be embittered** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) against them.

## MUTUALITY IN THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

**The wife does not** (present tense - continually) **have authority** ([exousiazō](#)) **over her own body, but the husband does-**  
**Amplified** = "For the wife does not have [exclusive] authority and control over her own body, but the husband [has his rights];" If Paul had stopped here, this would be the tagline for the practice [misogyny](#), the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls. Praise God, Paul under inspiration gives us the "other half of the coin."

**And likewise also the husband does not** (present tense - continually) **have authority** ([exousiazō](#)) **over his own body, but the wife does** - This is radical teaching in the [patriarchal society](#) that existed in Paul's day! Notice the tenses indicate that both husband and wife are to have authority over their spouse's body all of their married life.

This subjection of one spouse to another is essentially what Paul is describing in Ephesians 5:21+ writing that Spirit filled believers (Eph 5:18+ = only way to fulfill this instruction!) are to **'be** (present tense - continually) **subject to one another in the fear of Christ.**" There it is - a "*mutual admiration society*" so to speak! Husbands, not demanding, and wives not withholding (or vice versa)! In short, mutual subjection will yield much fulfillment in marital intimacy. Each one is laying down their "rights" for the benefit of the other person.

**MacArthur** - Spouses' mutual **authority** over each other's bodies is continuous (present tense); it lasts throughout marriage. In the normal realms of life, a Christian's body is his own, to take care of and to use as a gift from God. And in the deepest spiritual sense, of course, it belongs entirely to God (Ro 12:1+). But in the marital realm, it also belongs to the marriage partner. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Corinthians)

**Arnold** - Before marriage a person does exercise authority over his body as to how it will be used sexually. The person is to honor the body as the temple of God and keep it sexually pure. Yet, at the moment a person says, "I do," the body belongs to the person he or she marries. At that moment, a person forfeits his or her rights to exercise authority over his or her own body and has surrendered that authority to his or her marriage partner. **Notice carefully it does not say marriage partners are to demand their rights at all costs, but they are to give up their rights to meet the sexual needs of the partner. This is a basic law of life. The only way to get your needs met and yourself fulfilled is to fulfill another's needs.** In the process of devoting yourself to the enjoyment of your mate and to giving him or her the most exquisite sense of pleasure you can, you find your own needs met. This is not saying you are slaves to one another, each demanding his or her rights, but the power to give fulfillment to your mate lies in you, and in so doing, your needs will be met. To have this kind of attitude demands you have an adult kind of love. A child's concept of love is **getting**, but an adult's is **giving**. There are entirely too many "*child marriages*" these days in which adults behave like babies. They value marriage only because of what it does for them, but they do not see it as a means of investing in the one loved. Yet, this difference between **getting** and **giving** is actually the major difference between **love** and **lust**. Christian love always seeks the highest good of the person loved, not merely its own satisfaction. The breakdown of many marriages can be directly traced to the bedroom. Divorce occurs when we want to **get** instead of **give**. We need to understand that God has made us with the capacity to meet someone else's need sexually. This is why unresponsiveness and frigidity in marriage cause deep psychological problems and a rift occurs. God has given us the ability to give a gift of love and response to another person, and the joy of doing so is what creates the ecstasy of sexual love in marriage. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**Craig Keener** - Greek writers sometimes portrayed submitting to sexual relations or passion as bringing oneself under someone else's control.(IVPBBCNT)

**Have authority** (1850) [exousiazō](#) from [exousia](#) = the right and the might) means to exercise authority over others. The idea is that one who has the right or power and thus is able to do with something or someone as he sees fit. In 1 Co. 6:12+ Paul says "I will not be **mastered** by anything." Although "all things are lawful," there are limitations, so that what is possible, is not necessarily best. **Gilbrant** adds that "If the Christian is free to do all things, he is still not free to sin. 3x in NT -Lk. 22:25; 1 Co. 6:12; 1 Co. 7:4

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### First Kisses, No Second Guesses 1 Corinthians 7:4

When Adrian Burwell and Jill Merry got married recently, they shared their first kiss in front of more than six hundred people who

attended their wedding. "To me, the first kiss is one of the most precious gifts I can give away, and it's something I'll only give my wife," Burwell said.

Merry felt the same way. "I knew I didn't want to date around and give different parts of my heart to different guys. I just decided I wanted to save my first kiss for my wedding day," she said.[3]

How did they restrain themselves? They set guidelines early in the relationship and stuck to them. They had normal physical desires like everyone does, but they were both thinking about staying pure for their future spouse's sake. Their motivation was grounded in Scripture.

In 1 Corinthians 7:4, Paul made a statement that sounds foreign to our culture: Our bodies do not belong to us. They belong to Christ (1 Cor. 6:19) and to our future spouses if God intends for us to marry. And if he intends us for marriage, then a day is coming when we'll have to tell our future spouses about our sexual history. They do have a right to know whether we were saving ourselves for them or not.

What does that mean for those who haven't saved themselves? Is it too late for them? Let's flip the situation around and see if we can answer that question. Imagine that it's time for the discussion about sexual history between you and your future spouse. Your future spouse confesses sexual sin but is quick to tell you that he or she repented after realizing that his or her body belonged to God and you. How would you respond to such humility?

Whether you have been sexually pure in the past or not, you have a responsibility not only to God but to your potential future spouse to stay pure from this moment on. He or she has a right to expect purity from you. (Lee Warren - Single Servings - 90 Devotions to Feed Your Soul)

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### **Robert Munger - Belonging to One Another 1 CORINTHIANS 7:4**

Husband and wife belong to one another in such a way that both desire to please the other as though they were pleasing themselves.

In our age of endless struggle for independence, and in the wake of so many stories of domestic violence and abuse, Christians struggle to find the right interpretation for biblical teachings on marriage relationships. Some come up unduly harsh, and others are watered down to fit our society's current mores. But Paul doesn't need any help. His statement here is straightforward and clear. Writing in an age when it would have been easy to stop after the first sentence of this verse, thereby leaving all the power in the hands of the husband, the apostle adds, "And, wives, it is true for you too."

REFLECT: In what ways are you pursuing your independence to the detriment of your relationships?

**1 Corinthians 7:5 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**

Amplified Do not refuse and deprive and defraud each other [of your due marital rights], except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, so that you may devote yourselves unhindered to prayer. But afterwards resume marital relations, lest Satan tempt you [to sin] through your lack of restraint of sexual desire.

Wuest Do not continue to rob each other [by withholding yourselves from one another] except it be by mutual consent for a time in order that you may give yourselves to prayer, and that you may be united again, in order that Satan may not solicit you to sin because of your lack of self-control. ([Erdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive each other, except by mutual agreement for a specified time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then resume your relationship, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.



NIV 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:5 μ ποστερετε αλλλους, ε μπι ν κ συμφ νου πρ ς καιρ ν, να σχολ σητε τ προσευχ κα π λιν π τ ατ τε, να μ πειρ ζ μ ς Σαταν ς δι τ ν κρασ αν μ ν.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:5 Defraud not one another, except by consent for a time, that ye may be free for fasting and prayer, and again may come together, that the Adversary may not tempt you because of your incontinence;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive one another sexually-- except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, to be free for prayer, but then return to one another, so that Satan may not tempt you through your lack of self-control.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:5 You must not deprive each other, except by mutual consent for a limited time, to leave yourselves free for prayer, and to come together again afterwards; otherwise Satan may take advantage of any lack of self-control to put you to the test.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:5 Don't withhold yourselves from each other unless you agree to do so for a set time to devote yourselves to prayer. Then you should get back together so that Satan doesn't use your lack of self-control to tempt you.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not keep back from one another what is right, but only for a short time, and by agreement, so that you may give yourselves to prayer, and come together again; so that Satan may not get the better of you through your loss of self-control.

- **except:** Ex 19:15 1Sa 21:4,5 Joe 2:16 Zec 7:3 12:12-14
- **that Satan:** Mt 19:11 1Th 3:5
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Thessalonians 3:5+ For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the **Tempter** ([peirazo](#)) **might have tempted** ([peirazo](#)) you, and our labor would be in vain.

Matthew 4:1+ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be (present tense - continually) **tempted** ([peirazo](#)) by the devil. (HOW DID JESUS FIGHT THE TEMPTATION)

Hebrews 2:18+ (GOOD NEWS WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid ([boetheo](#)) of those who are (present tense - continually) **tempted** ([peirazo](#) in passive voice - outside force ~ being tempted by our fallen [flesh](#)).

**STOP PROLONGED  
ABSTENTION!**

Paul's point in this passage is that if you attempt to practice celibacy and do so without the divine gift of celibacy, you are a set up for

**Satan's schemes** (Eph 6:11+)! Paul is specifically speaking to married couples in this passage, but the advice is good for everyone!

**Utley** suggests that the commands in this passage relate "to the problem of [asceticism](#) in the Corinthian church. It also asserts that sex, or withholding sex, must not be a tool to control one's spouse!"

**Stop** (me = literally "no") **depriving one another, except by agreement for a time** - **Wuest** - "Do not continue to rob each other [by withholding yourselves from one another]" Paul is saying to the Corinthian saints essentially that it is too late to choose [celibacy](#) once you are married. **Stop depriving** is in the [present imperative with a negative](#) indicating that they were doing this and they needed to stop doing this because they were placing themselves at "high risk" in regard to spiritual attacks (temptations) from Satan (and I would also add from our [fallen flesh](#)! see 1 Pe 2:11b+). **Agreement** means a joint agreement but Paul says only for a "season" ([kairos](#)) and while he does not give a length, the implication would seem to be only for a SHORT time! [See note on Jewish teachings](#) on how long this was to last).

**Strain** notes that **Stop depriving one another** is actually "Do not defraud one another." He's conceiving of marriage as a debt, as something that is owed to one another, as sexual intimacy in marriage rather as a debt that is owed; a sacred obligation designed by God for the good of both partners in marriage....Paul is teaching us that ordinarily sex within marriage is a Christian duty. It's a debt that we owe. And the way that he speaks about it, there's something profoundly Christ-like here in this pattern of mutual service and self-giving that Paul describes. Christ, you remember, gave Himself for His bride, giving Himself up for her. That is how He loves His bride, the Church. He does not stand on His rights but voluntarily surrenders them for the good of His bride....Anyone who takes Paul's teaching here in these five verses as warrant to demand what should be given as an act of loving service distorts the Scriptures in dangerous ways. There is no place for the kind of abusive demands that sometimes find their way even into Christian marriages. But then neither is there any place for manipulative withholding of sexual union for selfish or spiteful ends that also sometimes finds its place even in Christian marriages.

**Arnold** - The word "deprive" ([apostereo](#)) actually means "to rob" or "to defraud." Christians have no right to deprive their mates of sexual fulfillment and enjoyment. If sexual rights are withheld, the Christian is actually robbing his or her mate of what is rightfully theirs. Apparently there were some at Corinth who were habitually abstaining from the sex act with their mates, thinking this was a higher state of morality and a true mark of spirituality. Although the conditions have changed drastically from the first century to our day, the fact tragically still remains with us. Today many Christians are robbing their mates of sexual enjoyment and doing it in the name of God and under the cloak of spirituality. If Paul were here today, he would say, "Stop this nonsense at once!" ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**Arnold on except by agreement** - A husband and wife may agree to a cessation period for the sex act or a definite spiritual purpose—that they may concentrate on prayer to God. The word "devote" means "to have leisure." Cessation is done so a couple may give themselves leisurely to prayer without distractions. Cessation is a good thing but it must always be by mutual consent, temporary in nature and for a spiritual purpose. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**Utley on except by agreement** - "except by agreement" This phrase begins with *ei mēti*, which means "unless perhaps" or "unless it be" (cf. Luke 9:13). It is giving one possible exception to the stated norm. This type of structure (a rule then an exception) is used throughout this chapter. Paul is walking the theological tightrope between legalism/asceticism and libertinism/antinomianism. Each faction had its own agenda and slogans! Notice Paul is expressing an egalitarian model. The husband does not have the right to choose alone! Biblical male headship is tragically misunderstood. The husband must act in self-giving ways for the maturity of the family (cf. Eph. 5:25–29), not for personal interest or in personal preference, but in spiritual stewardship....The NT principle of voluntary fasting periodically for spiritual purposes is paralleled here with periodic sexual abstinence within marriage for spiritual purposes. As fasting focuses the mind on God's will, so too, can limited sexual abstinence.

**Knofel Staton on except by agreement for a time** - "When Paul says "except by mutual consent," he is making it clear that one partner in the marriage relationship does not have the right to control the sexual decisions. The practical advice of this is that a husband does not have the right to be saying every night, "Sorry, 'Sorry, honey; I'm just too tired,' nor does the wife have the divine freedom to say every evening, "I'm sorry, honey; but I have a headache" (1 Corinthians).

**Agreement** ([4859](#))([sumphonos](#) from [sun/syn](#) = together + [phone](#) = a sound, voice) means symphonious, blending of voices or musical instruments, and so the idea is of one voice, of the same opinion, in the only NT use (1 Cor 7:7) expressing a bilateral agreement between the marriage-partners to temporarily abstain from sexual relations. Lxx use in Eccl 7:14. Here "in agreement" refers to a "break (halt) in sexual access" between marriage partners. This should only happen for a short time and must be a two-way decision (agreement). 1 Cor 7:5 does not suggest "forced sexual abstinence," i.e. imposed by one partner on the other.

**THOUGHT** - God gives each marriage partner the scriptural right to the other's body (1 Cor 7:1-5). When one

partner alone insists on sustained abstinence from sex, it can constitute a scriptural ground for divorce. Sexual abstinence in marriage then is not a "one-partner decision"!

**Depriving** (translated **defrauded** in 1 Cor 6:7-8+) (91)(**apostereo** from **apó** = from + **steréō** = to deprive) means to be or become deprived of something by deceit, deception, trickery. To wrong. To **defraud**. (1) active, as obtaining something by deceiving another - deprive, defraud, steal (1Cor 6.8); **figuratively, of marital rights withhold, deprive** (1Cor 7.5); (2) passive permit oneself to be defrauded; let oneself be robbed (1Cor 6.7+) . **BDAG** - (1) to cause another to suffer loss by taking away through illicit means, rob, steal, despoil, defraud (2) 2. to prevent someone from having the benefit of someth. (1 Cor 7:5) . **Zodhiates** - In the mid., **aposteréomai**, to suffer oneself to be defrauded, as spoken of persons (1 Cor. 6:7+); to be kept back by fraud, as spoken of a thing (James 5:4, wages held back by fraud; Sept.: Deut. 24:16; Mal. 3:5). The pass. joined with a gen., to be destitute of, devoid of (1 Ti 6:5, "defrauding themselves" [a.t.], i.e., "destitute of the truth" [cf. 1 Cor. 7:5 in respect to conjugal intercourse]).

**Apostereo** is used 5x in NT - Mk. 10:19; 1 Co. 6:7; 1 Co. 6:8; 1 Co. 7:5; 1 Ti 6:5 Used in the Septuagint in Ex 21:10, Mal 3:5.

**Time** (season) (2540)(**kairos**) means a point of time or period of time, time, period, frequently with the implication of being especially fit for something and without emphasis on precise chronology. It describes the period as especially appropriate and favorable (the right time). Stated another way **kairos** is distinguished from **chronos** (time) because **kairos** views TIME from the aspect of the strategic opportunity it provides, and not simply a change from the past into the present into the future, not mere duration. (Trench)Something that lasts for a season and so is transient, temporary or enduring only for a specific period of time. Kairos is a period which is especially appropriate - a favorable time (at the right time).

**So that** (term of purpose) - The purpose is for the couple to agree on sexual abstinence.

**You may devote yourselves to prayer (proseuche) and come together again - So that (hina)** introduces the purpose for making a mutual agreement, but only for a time. Devote is subjunctive mood, the mood of possibility. It is possible they might chose to deprive themselves but not fill the "void" (so to speak) with devotion to prayer. **Come together again** seems almost a euphemistic way to describe their intimate relations.

There is an Old Testament precedent associating abstinence and approach to God as in Exodus 19:9-15+

The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. 10 The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; 11 and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 "You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 'No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. 15 He said to the people, "**Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.**" (See similar idea in Joel 2:12-14, 16).

**Devote** (4980) (**scholazo** from **schole** = leisure) is used only in Mt 12:44+ (of a building to be unoccupied, stand empty, metaphorically, of a person after demons have been caused to leave); 1Co 7:5+. It means to take a holiday, to have time, be at leisure for (by implication devote oneself wholly to) be free from labor, to give one's time to. Figuratively it is uses of a place and means to be vacant or empty. Here in 1 Cor 7:5 (with the dative), **scholazo** means to have leisure for something, to give oneself to something free from other cares and hindrances (1 Co 7:5). **Scholazo** in the Lxx = Ex 5:8, 17+; Ps 46:10+ "**Cease striving** (scholazo in the **aojist imperative**) and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

**So that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control - So that (hina)** introduces the purpose for not voluntarily abstaining from sexual relations with one's spouse. They were spiritually vulnerable because of two problems (1) the **intractable Adversary** and (2) the absence of self-control.

**Utley** - Even married couples need to be extremely careful of Satan's insidious temptations within marriage. Human sexuality, though a gift from God, is a powerful human drive. Satan uses this aspect of biological need as a tool to alienate fallen mankind from God. This is true both for lost and saved, though at different levels (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14-15).

**Arnold** - Paul puts his finger on what is one of the most frequent causes of disaster in marriage: a unilateral refusal to grant the gift

of enjoyment and pleasure to one's mate. If a cessation period is agreed upon, do not refuse each other too long, lest Satan get the advantage, temptations arise and adultery occurs. This verse tells us who is the power behind the scene in the breakup of so many marriages. It is Satan himself, and he is out to destroy Christians and Christian homes. That is why we are told in Scripture to beware of the wiles or strategies of the devil. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**David Prior** - "Equally, if true giving to each other in sexual intercourse is the essence of a union where God has joined two individuals together, then Satan will do his worst in inhibiting, spoiling, robbing it of its purity and its fulfilling potential. Satan is always active in a Christian marriage, to quench shared prayer and to reduce the joys of sex to his own debased level" (1 Corinthians)

**Arnold** adds an interesting note - If a person has the gift of celibacy that person must never marry or marriage will be a disaster. On the other hand, there is a gift to marry. If a person has the gift to marry, it would be a tragedy to remain unmarried. The man who has this gift has the capacity to love, and the woman who has this gift has the capacity to submit. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**Lack of self-control** describes the person who has jettisoned inhibitions and shame, who does not care about what people think or what happens to them because of what he or she does. Like a driverless car, they careen haphazardly and crash into whatever gets in their way. The lover of self eventually loses control of his own life and becomes a slave to his passions and ambitions. A man can reach a stage when, so far from controlling it, he can become a slave to some habit or desire. That is the inevitable way to ruin! Look out Paul says, lack of self-control is a highway you do not want to drive down (because it is in fact a downward spiral)! The antonym or opposite of [akrasia](#) is [egkrateia/enkrateia](#) which conveys the idea is *holding oneself in* or the ability to take a grip of oneself. It is self-control proceeding out from within oneself, but not by oneself, and for the believer is only possible by depending on the supernatural power of the indwelling Spirit, this self-control being a part of the "fruit" of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:23+). And remember, that although the saints at Corinth knew that the Spirit was indwelling them (1 Cor 6:19+), some (? many or most) of them were still spiritual infants and walking like "mere men," that is, living their lives in dependence of their fleshly self-control which does not stand a chance against the strong impulses for sexual gratification that emanate from our fallen flesh! And so Paul recognizing the continual nature of this spiritual warfare (see 1Pe 2:11b+), like a military general commands them to stop depriving themselves of one another!

**THOUGHT** - One other thought - Spirit enabled self-control is like a "shield" deflecting the arrows of Satan's temptations from striking our heart. The take home message? Be (continually) filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18+). Note that even obeying the command to continually be filled ([present imperative](#)) necessitates dependence on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#). This is somewhat mysterious to me (that we cannot even obey the command to be filled unless the Spirit enables us to obey!), but is clearly God's Word and Way! .

**Satan** (4567) ([satanas](#) transliterated from Hebrew [Satan](#) - see [07854](#) and Aramaic *sātānā*) literally means **Adversary**, the evil antagonist who offers opposition, hostility, resentment, etc. An enemy who that contends with, opposes, resists. An **adversary** is one who hates or opposes another person and tries to harm them or stop them from doing something because of hatred and malice. The term *Satanás* emphasizes the devil's irreconcilable, intense opposition to Christ, His kingdom and all His followers. **Satan** is the [inveterate](#), [implacable](#), relentless, ruthless, remorseless, merciless, heartless, pitiless, cruel, hard, harsh, hardened, incorrigible, dedicated enemy of God and man.

**Satan** in NT - Mt. 4:10; Mt. 12:26; Mt. 16:23; Mk. 1:13; Mk. 3:23; Mk. 3:26; Mk. 4:15; Mk. 8:33; Lk. 10:18; Lk. 11:18; Lk. 13:16; Lk. 22:3; Lk. 22:31; Jn. 13:27; Acts 5:3; Acts 26:18; Rom. 16:20; 1 Co. 5:5; 1 Co. 7:5; 2 Co. 2:11; 2 Co. 11:14; 2 Co. 12:7; 1 Th 2:18; 2 Th 2:9; 1 Ti 1:20; 1 Ti 5:15; Rev. 2:9; Rev. 2:13; Rev. 2:24; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 12:9; Rev. 20:2; Rev. 20:7

**Tempt** (3985) [peirazo](#) from the noun **peira** = test from **peiro** = perforate, pierce through to test durability of things) is a morally neutral word simply meaning "to test". Whether the **test** is for a good (as it proved to be in Heb 11:17) or evil (Mt 4:1+ "*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** by the devil*") depends on the intent of the one giving the test and also on the response of the one tested. (See study of similar word [dokimazo](#) and related word [peirasmos](#)). **Peirazo** in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 7:5; 1 Co. 10:9; 1 Co. 10:13; 2 Co. 13:5

James writes "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is (present tense - continually) **tempted** (passive voice - outside force ~ being tempted by our fallen [flesh](#)) when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. (Jas. 1:13-14+)

**Self-control** (192) ([akrasia](#) from **akrates** = incontinent from a = without + **krátos** = strength, prevail) means properly, lack of

dominion (not prevailing), i.e. inability to maintain control; figuratively, want of self-restraint, without self-control, and therefore mastered by personal appetites (urges). Only 2 uses in NT - Mt 23:25 1 Cor 7:5

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### Lowell Johnson - Experiencing marriage as a Spiritual Relationship 7:5

Unresponsiveness always causes problems in marriage – emotionally , psychologically, and spiritually.

The word “**defraud**” could be translated: “Do not refuse one another ... Do not cheat one another ... Do not rob one another.

Sex within marriage is NOT:

- • A right to be earned
- • A reward to be given
- • A tool to be used as a threat
- • A means of punishment because of some mistake or to get even or to get what you want from your mate.

Sexual oneness in marriage should not be withheld because of fatigue, apathy, resentment, etc.

Three guidelines are given by Paul for withholding sex:

1. By mutual consent
2. An important reason
3. For a brief period – then come together again.

When we deprive our mates, Satan can use that to tempt our mates to become unfaithful. You are tempting your mate.

You are also destroying a spiritual principle – that of ministering to one another.

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**Utlej** on **lack of self-control** - “because of your lack of self-control” This is the term *kratos*, which means “power,” “strength,” “rule,” with the ALPHA PRIVATIVE, which negates the meaning. This lack of self-control is mentioned in

1. Matthew 23:25 in connection with the scribes and Pharisees
2. 1 Corinthians 7:5 in connection with married couples
3. 2 Timothy 3:3+ in a list of vices.

The related term [egkrateia](#) has the connotation of self-control, especially related to sexual activity.

1. Acts 24:25+ in a list of virtues presented by Paul to Felix
2. 1 Corinthians 7:9 in Paul’s discussion of marriage rights
3. 1 Corinthians 9:25+ in connection with athletic training
4. Galatians 5:23+ in Paul’s list of the fruits of the Spirit
5. 2 Peter 1:6+ in a list of character traits which bring maturity.

Self-control is the developed practice of controlling the natural desires. The domination of the redeemed human spirit over the flesh is possible (ED: ACTUALLY **ONLY** POSSIBLE!) with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Natural desires are not evil unless they are taken beyond God-given bounds. ([1 Corinthians 7 Commentary](#))

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**A BETTER YIELD** As in all things, the spiritual must govern the physical; for our bodies are God's temples. The husband and wife may abstain from sex in order to devote their full interest to prayer and fasting (1 Cor 7:5), but they must not use this as an excuse for prolonged separation. Paul is encouraging Christian partners to be "in tune" with each other in matters both spiritual and physical.

Not only did the church ask about celibacy, but they also asked Paul about divorce. If divorce does occur, the parties should remain unmarried or seek reconciliation. It has been my experience as a pastor that when a husband and wife are yielded to the Lord, and when they seek to please each other in the marriage relationship, the marriage will be so satisfying that neither partner would think of looking elsewhere for fulfillment.

"There are no sex problems in marriage," a Christian counselor once told me, "only personality problems with sex as one of the symptoms." The present frightening trend of increased divorces among Christians (and even among the clergy) must break the heart of God. (Warren Wiersbe - Pause for Power)

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**Related Resources:**



- **Self controlled** (Disciplined) ([1468](#)) [egkrates/enkrates](#)
- **Self control, exercise** ([1467](#)) [egkrateuomai](#)
- **Self Control** ([1466](#)) [egkrateia](#)
- **Self-control** ([4996](#)) [sophronos](#)
- [The Fruit of the Holy Spirit – What is self-control? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is temptation a sin? Is it a sin to be tempted? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about temptation? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean to flee from temptation? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why is sexual temptation a bigger problem for men than for women? | GotQuestions.org](#)

### Arnold - What does God want us Christians to learn from this passage of Scripture 1 Corinthians 7:1-7?

First, as a Christian husband or wife, you alone of all people on earth can, with God's blessing, satisfy the deep need of the person you married. A man can hire a maid to clean his house or a cook to prepare his food, but only his wife can meet this need for sexual expression with the approval of heaven. A husband is the only person on earth whose purity can satisfy the need for affection in his wife.

Second, you may have to arrange your life so that sex in marriage has a higher place on your list of important things. You may have to cut down on the work load at home or the office, or the outside activities at church or in the community to pay this debt to your wife or husband.

Third, you, as a Christian, must remember the greatest safeguard to a husband's sexual purity is the affection of a devoted wife, and the greatest guarantee of a woman's faithfulness is the devotion of an affectionate husband.

Jewish teachers who were trying to formulate laws in this period differed on how long a man could vow to abstain from intercourse with his wife. The following statements come from the ancient Jewish writing (*m. Ketuboth* 5:6), written about ad 200.

- **"He who takes a vow, does *not* have to have sexual relations with his wife."** The House of Shammai says, '[He may allow this situation to continue] for *two weeks*.' But the House of Hillel says, 'For *one week*.' Disciples can go forth for Torah study without sex, or the wife's consent for *thirty days*."
- **"The sexual duty of spouses** [cf. Torah, Ex 21:10]: those without work [i.e. are of independent means should have sex] *every day*; workers, should have sex with their wives at least *twice a week* (because they are more tired); ass (donkey) drivers, at least *once a week* (because they are gone so much); camel drivers, at least *once in thirty days*; and, sailors, at least once in *six months*," because of the long business trips involved (so R. Eliezer, Neusner, *Mishnah*).

### Question: [What is the meaning of mutual consent in 1 Corinthians 7:5?](#)

**Answer:** In 1 Corinthians 7, the apostle Paul is addressing practical questions related to marriage raised by the believers in Corinth. He instructs husbands and wives not to deprive one another of sexual intimacy "except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (verse 5). Paul uses the term *mutual consent* to indicate that both parties—both husband and wife—must agree to the decision and the terms of their temporary period of sexual abstinence.

It seems that certain members of the church in Corinth were claiming that it was "good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman" (1 Corinthians 7:1). This blanket statement made without any conditions implies that the best option for every person in every situation is to abstain from sex. But Paul corrects this misconception, explaining that married believers should continue in their sexual relationship with one another: "But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs" (1 Corinthians 7:2–3, NLT).

Two opposing extremes were occurring in the church in Corinth. Some members were excusing flagrant [sexual immorality](#), incest (1 Corinthians 5:1), and prostitution (1 Corinthians 6:15–16), while others were advocating for total abstinence, even between married couples. Paul links the two problems, suggesting that forced abstinence between husbands and wives may be encouraging sexually immoral behavior in the church. Paul maintains that married people should fulfill their spouse's sexual needs.

The Bible affirms that sexual intimacy in marriage is a blessing from God and a privilege designed to be nurtured and enjoyed: "Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love" (Proverbs 5:18–19, NLT; see also Song of Solomon 4:9–16).

Married couples have a responsibility and an obligation not to hold back sexual intimacy without good reason (Exodus 21:10). Paul points out that neither party has the right to deprive the other: "The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:4, NLT). Paul's statement here strengthens the idea that sexual intimacy is designed to be equally agreeable and mutually satisfying to the husband and the wife.

In 1 Corinthians 7:5, Paul unambiguously asserts that, if a married couple decides to abstain from sex, it must be by mutual consent for a spiritual purpose (to seek God in focused prayer), and only for a determined amount of time. *Mutual consent* means that both the husband and the wife agree to the temporary period of abstinence. The custom of refraining from sexual relations during special times of religious devotion, such as for prayer and fasting, has its foundation in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 21:4–5). Paul likely had this practice in mind as he taught the Corinthians.

The Bible is clear that married couples are not to deprive one another of sexual gratification, except by mutual agreement and only for a specific timeframe and purpose. Once the devoted time has ended, the couple ought to resume physical relations so that Satan cannot tempt them into sexual misconduct. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

### 1 Corinthians 7:6 But this I say by way of concession, not of command.

Amplified But I am saying this more as a matter of permission and concession, not as a command or regulation.

Wuest But this I am saying by way of a concession [in view of your circumstances], not by way of an injunction. ([Eerdmans Publishing](http://Eerdmans Publishing) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:6 I say this as a concession, not as a command.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:6 I say this as a concession, not as a command.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:6 Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:6 I say this as a concession, not as a command.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:6 το το δ λ γω κατ συγγν μην ο κατ πιπαγ ν.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:6 and this I say by way of concurrence -- not of command,

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:6 But this I say by way of concession, not of commandment.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:6 I say the following as a concession, not as a command.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:6 But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:6 This I say by way of concession, not of command.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:6 This I say by way of concession, however, not as a command.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:6 I am telling you this as a concession, not an order.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:6 What I have just said is not meant as a command but as a suggestion.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:6 But this I say as my opinion, and not as an order of the Lord.

- **by:** 1Co 7:12,25 2Co 8:8 11:17
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S CONCESSION

**Concession** - Something, such as a point previously claimed in argument, that is later conceded. Yielding or acknowledging often reluctantly as being true.

**But this I say by way of concession, not of command**- To what does **this I say** refer? I favor the preceding passages about marriage, but some favor verse 7 (singleness). In other words, abstention/abstinence for short periods is permitted but not commanded (he had given 4 commands related to marriage in 1 Cor 7:2-3). "Paul is giving his Spirit-led opinion." (Utley) **Concession** is *suggnome* (only here in NT - from sun = with + gnome = opinion, sentiment, will) which means an agreement



to meet someone halfway; hence concession, permission, allowance, to think the same thing as someone, to have a joint opinion, a common mind or understanding.

**Zodhiates on concession** - The word in ancient Greek meant "sympathetic" or "an attitude of good will toward someone, lenience, indulgence." It also means, when it is used as "I have sugnómēn," that I have forgiveness for some wrong. Actually it is used in modern Greek with this meaning. One can say, "Sugnómēn," meaning, "Excuse me, please forgive me." Actually, Paul is asking the indulgence of the Corinthian Christians for bringing such intimacies of the marital relationships to their attention. It is as if he is saying: "Please forgive me for doing so." And really, I would feel likewise if I were to speak to a congregation of believers on such personal matters, or if I were writing to them, I would offer an apology or ask for their indulgence for doing so, not really their permission. Probably Paul went into greater details about marital behavior than he wanted to, but he felt it necessary for their sakes. These private matters of conduct do greatly and seriously affect the general conduct and testimony of Christ's Church in the world.

**Henry Morris** - The "permission" given Paul was obviously from the Lord, since no one was above Paul in terms of apostolic authority. Thus, he was claiming--not denying--divine inspiration. He did not have an explicit "commandment" to cite for this teaching, either from the Mosaic law or the teachings of Christ, but rather had direct divine authorization. (Defender's Study Bible).

**Believer's Study Bible** - A similar statement is made by Paul in 1 Cor 7:12. Paul does not intend the Corinthians to understand that he is departing from apostolic authority and from inspired writing in order to propose an opinion of his own. A careful reading of 1 Cor 7:10 in comparison will show that though Paul is saying we have no word directly from Jesus, he nevertheless speaks "by permission," or under the direction of the Holy Spirit, in 1 Cor 7:6 and 1 Cor 7:12. In 1 Cor 7:10 definite reference is made to a saying of Jesus (cf. Mark 10:1-9).

**Moody Bible Commentary** - Abstinence was appropriate for a temporary and mutually determined time to pray (or engage in any other spiritual discipline), but abstinence was not mandatory on those occasions (v. 6).

**William MacDonald** - Verse 6 has given rise to a great deal of speculation and controversy. Paul says: "But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment." Some have taken this to mean that the apostle did not consider the foregoing words to be inspired by God. Such an interpretation is untenable, since he claims in 1 Corinthians 14:37 that the things which he was writing to the Corinthians were the commandments of the Lord. We feel rather that the apostle was saying that under certain circumstances, it was all right for a married couple to abstain from the marriage act, but that this abstinence is a permission, not a commandment. Christian people do not have to refrain from this act in order to give themselves undividedly to prayer. Others feel that verse 6 refers to the whole idea of marriage, that is, that Christians are permitted to marry but are not commanded to do so.

**Arnold** - Paul is not commanding people to get married. Marriage is not a "must." It is by permission and not commandment Paul has laid down the duties of all who are married, but he does not lay it down as a duty that all should be married. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**Keener** - Paul permits but does not require periods of abstinence, implying that it is those who wish to abstain (rather than those who do not) who are weak. Abstinence within marriage is their idea, not his. (Ibid)

**1 Corinthians 7:7 Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.**

Amplified I wish that all men were like I myself am [in this matter of self-control]. But each has his own special gift from God, one of this kind and one of another.

Wuest But I wish that all men were even as also I myself. But each one has his own spiritual gift from God, one, on the one hand, in one way, and the other, on the other hand, in another way. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:7 I wish that everyone was as I am. But each has his own gift from God, one this way, another that.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:7 But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. But God gives to some the gift of marriage, and to others the gift of singleness.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:7 I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:7 I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:7 ἠλω ὁ πῦτας νῆρ πους εἰαι ς κα μαυτ ν· λλ καστος διον χει χρισμα κ θεο , μ ν ο τως, ὀ ο τως.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:7 for I wish all men to be even as I myself am; but each his own gift hath of God, one indeed thus, and one thus.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:7 Yet I would that all men were even as I myself. Howbeit each man hath his own gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:7 I wish that all people were just like me. But each has his own gift from God, one person in this way and another in that way.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:7 I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:7 Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am, but each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:7 I should still like everyone to be as I am myself; but everyone has his own gift from God, one this kind and the next something different.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:7 I would like everyone to be like me. However, each person has a special gift from God, and these gifts vary from person to person.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:7 It is my desire that all men might be even as I am. But every man has the power of his special way of life given him by God, one in this way and one in that.

- **I wish:** . 1Co 9:5,15 Ac 26:29
- **However:** 1Co 12:11 Mt 19:11,12
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CALL TO SINGLENES

**Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am**- How was Paul? Single, free and satisfied despite the fact that he had no wife or family, which he knew would have impeded his independence in ministry for the Lord. So he is not giving a command but his desire. He is certainly not advocating getting a divorce if you are married. As he will say later regarding circumcision and slavery, the principle is remain in the condition you are in - married (he gives some exceptions for unbelieving spouses), single, divorced, or virgin.

**Spirituality is not determined by marital status.**

-- John MacArthur

**However, each man ([hekastos](#)) has his own gift ([charisma](#)) from God, one in this manner, and another in that** - Amplified - "But each has his own special gift from God, one of this kind and one of another." Presumably Paul is referring to his "gift" of singleness or celibacy, the ability to live without conjugal relations (and not be tempted in this area). As happens with spiritual gifts in general, at times believers attempt to use a spiritual gift they do not possess (e.g., the most common one I have seen is teaching), and it only produces frustration. The same principle applies to the "gift" of singleness or celibacy ([contrary to what some religions advocate](#) and we can see the tragic fallout from such an unbiblical practice). As [Gotquestions](#) says "Men whom God has not gifted or called to be celibate are being required to be celibate, and the result is tremendous failures in the areas of adultery, fornication, and the sexual abuse of children."

**Jack Arnold** - Here we are told there is a special **gift** from God of celibacy (the ability to stay single). The person must determine for himself whether he or she has this gift. A person who has the gift of celibacy might have a fierce independent spirit and would not fare well in a marriage where dependency is essential. This person might not feel the need for someone else to complete or fulfill

him or her. And most certainly the person with the gift of celibacy has the ability to control his or her sex drives and must be committed to a life of sexual purity. ([Sexual Responsibilities Within Marriage](#))

**MacArthur** on singleness - The attitude among Christians today about singleness, however, is often like that of Jewish tradition in Paul's day. It is looked on as a second-class condition. "Not so," says the apostle. If singleness is God's gift to a person, it is God's will for that person to accept and exercise the gift. If that person is submissive to God, he can live in singleness all his life in perfect contentment and happiness. Obviously, singleness has many practical advantages. It allows much greater freedom in where and how a person serves the Lord. He is freer to move around and to set his own hours and schedule. As Paul points out later in the chapter, married persons have many cares and concerns that the unmarried do not have (vv. 32–34). [Rachel Saint](#) served as a single missionary among the Auca Indians of Ecuador for many years without companionship. She poured out her life and her love to the Indians and found great blessing and fulfillment.

**MacDonald** - Paul now begins advice to the unmarried. It is clear, first of all, that he considered the unmarried state preferable, but he recognized that it could be followed only as God enabled. When he says: "For I wish that all men were even as I myself," it is obvious from the context that he means "unmarried." There is much diversity of opinion as to whether Paul had always been a bachelor, or whether he was a widower at the time he wrote this. However, for present purposes, it is not necessary to settle the debate, even if we could. Where Paul says: "But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that," he means that God gives grace to some to remain unmarried whereas He definitely calls others to the married state. It is an individual matter, and no general legislation can be adopted which can be applicable to all.

**Believer's Study Bible** - Celibacy is the ability of an individual to live without conjugal relationships. Genesis 2:18 indicates that God's plan in the beginning was for man to have a helper suitable to him, a counterpart and companion with whom to share life and responsibility. With sin's entry, however, the paradise God designed for man was thwarted and distorted, bringing many changes, even in that most intimate human relationship. Among the spiritual gifts is the **gift** of celibacy, which Paul himself possessed. This **gift** enabled him to live the single life with contentment (cf. Phil. 4:11) and usefulness (cf. 1 Cor 7:33, 34). Often, as in the case of Paul himself, there is a need for men and women to give themselves completely in service for the "things of the Lord" (cf. 1 Cor 7:32). In any case, celibacy is an exception and not the norm. It is bestowed by God to individuals for varying periods of times and for a myriad of reasons. The Greek word used to describe celibacy in this verse is [charisma](#), the same word translated elsewhere as "spiritual gift." Celibacy, therefore, may be regarded as a spiritual gift.

**Gift (5486) charisma** from **charis** = **grace** + the ending **--ma** which indicates the result of something, in this case the result of grace, "the subjective grace that works within and shows itself in its result" [Wuest]) is a Pauline word (with exception of 1 Peter 4:10+) which literally means a **gift of grace** or a free gift. Considering that the root is **charis** (**grace**) the favor or gift which one receives is without any merit of one's own. Stated another way, whatever spiritual gift a man has comes from God, and should be no cause for personal pride or praise. It is something given to a man by God which the man himself could not have acquired or attained. **Thayer** writes that **charisma** "in the technical Pauline sense of extraordinary powers distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit." Notice also (and it is not surprising) that sixteen of the seventeen New Testament uses of **charisma** are connected to God as the Giver of the free gift. Specifically Paul explains (esp in 1 Cor 12:4, 6, 7, 11) that **charisma** is a special spiritual gift (or ability) bestowed by the Holy Spirit according to His will for the profit of the body of Christ and the work of the ministry in turn to enable believers to fulfill certain assigned functions in the body.

**Charisma** - 17x in 17v in the NT - Rom. 1:11; Rom. 5:15; Rom. 5:16; Rom. 6:23; Rom. 11:29; Rom. 12:6; 1 Co. 1:7; 1 Co. 7:7; 1 Co. 12:4; 1 Co. 12:9; 1 Co. 12:28; 1 Co. 12:30; 1 Co. 12:31; 2 Co. 1:11; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Pet. 4:10

#### Related Resource:

- [Click here](#) for summary of spiritual gifts
- [See story of John Berridge's Singleness below](#)

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**Question:** [Does the Bible teach that there is a gift of celibacy?](#)

**Answer:** Two passages in the New Testament are typically used to discuss what is sometimes called "the gift of celibacy." The first is Matthew 19:9–12, "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." The disciples said to him, 'If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.' Jesus replied, 'Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The

one who can accept this should accept it.”

The phrase only those to whom it has been given refers to people receiving what some call “the gift of celibacy” or “the gift of singleness.” Regardless of what we call the gift, Jesus teaches that most people do not naturally desire to remain single and celibate for a lifetime. Of the exceptions, two are physical, and one is ethical or religious: 1) some forego marriage due to their natural constitution—they are born with no desire to marry; 2) some do not marry because of some violent act perpetrated upon them by others; and 3) some, by the grace of God, have chosen to renounce marriage for the kingdom’s sake. Such celibates have received a special gift from God.

The other pertinent passage is 1 Corinthians 7. In this chapter Paul states that it is not wrong to get married, but that it is better if a Christian can stay single. (The reason is that a married man’s attention is “divided” between pleasing the Lord and pleasing his wife; a single man is free to be more focused on the Lord’s work, verses 32-34.) Paul says, “I wish that all men were [unmarried] as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that” (verse 7). Paul is careful to state that this is “a concession, not . . . a command” (verse 6). The ability to stay single and serve God apart from marriage is a gift. Paul and some others had this gift, but not everyone.

As we see, the Bible does not explicitly call this “**the gift of celibacy**,” but it does express that the ability to remain unmarried to serve God more fully is a gift. Most adults desire marriage, and this desire is not sinful. In fact, marriage can keep us from sin: “Since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband” (1 Corinthians 7:2). Rather than engage in immorality, believers are to be married. Sex within marriage between one man and one woman or celibate singleness—these are the only two options for Christians.

Although the Bible does speak of celibacy as a gift, it is not listed with the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12). Singleness is a gift that God gives everyone, at least temporarily. For some, the gift of singleness is permanent; for others, God takes that gift away and gives the gift of marriage in its place. The Bible encourages those who are celibate in Christian service that they are an important part of God’s family.[GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### Related Resources:

- [Does the Bible teach the celibacy of priests? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)
- [What does the Bible say about a Christian staying single? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)**MATERIALISM: DIVIDED INTERESTS**
- [Does marriage hinder your relationship with God? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### David Jeremiah - IF YOU'RE HAPPY AND YOU KNOW IT

For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:7

When Margaret Achorn retrieved a large package from the post office one Christmas, she didn’t recognize the sender’s name. She became suspicious: what if it was a bomb? After the police bomb squad opened it, the only thing left in the debris was the warranty card for the new stereo. She never found out who sent such a nice gift, or why.

Sometimes Christians act suspicious about the gifts God has given them. While they may know the giver is God, they are hesitant to enjoy the gift, wondering what strings might be attached. A little-known reference to spiritual gifts in the New Testament is when Paul uses the Greek word charisma to refer to the inclination to be married or remain single (1 Corinthians 7:7).

Some unmarried Christians are fully content being single but get the idea from the world (and sometimes the church) that they shouldn’t be—that marriage is always better. If you are single and content, stay that way, and use your gift for the glory of God.

Singles can build up the body of Christ with their gift only if the church recognizes the grace of God at work in their lives.

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#### 1 Corinthians 7:8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.

Amplified But to the unmarried people and to the widows, I declare that it is well (good, advantageous, expedient, and wholesome) for them to remain [single] even as I do.

Wuest I say then to the unmarried men and to the widows that it is a right procedure for them if they remain as I also am. ([Eerdmans Publishing](http://Eerdmans Publishing) - used [by permission](http://by permission))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:8 To the unmarried and widows I say that it is best for them to remain as I am.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:8 So I say to those who aren't married and to widows-- it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:8 Ἀ γω ὁ το ς γ μοις κα τα ς χ ραις, καλ ν α το ς ν με νωσιν ς κ γ .

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:8 And I say to the unmarried and to the widows: it is good for them if they may remain even as I am;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:8 I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they remain as I am.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:8 Now to the unmarried and to widows, I say: it is a good thing for them to remain as they are, as I do,

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:8 To the unmarried and to widows I say: it is good for them to stay as they are, like me.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:8 I say to those who are not married, especially to widows: It is good for you to stay single like me.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows, It is good for them to be even as I am.

- 1Co 7:26,27,32,34,35
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Marry** (married) - 11x in 8v - 1 Cor 7:9 1 Cor 7:10 1 Cor 7:28 1 Cor 7:33 1 Cor 7:34 1 Cor 7:36 1 Cor 7:38 1 Cor 7:39

**Husband...wife** - 17x in 10v - 1 Cor 7:2 1 Cor 7:3 1 Cor 7:4 1 Cor 7:10 1 Cor 7:11 1 Cor 7:13 1 Cor 7:14 1 Cor 7:16 1 Cor 7:34 1 Cor 7:39

## PAUL ADVISES UNMARRIED TO STAY UNMARRIED

**Arnold** introduces **unmarried** in vv 8-9 - These Corinthians had written a letter to Paul asking him questions about marriage. These questions arose because there were some who were giving a twisted and perverted view of celibacy. They were teaching that marriage was a moral evil in contrast to the single state. They really believed celibacy was a morally superior position and that the truly spiritual people in the local church would not get married. So the whole congregation was being challenged as to whether it was right to get married or to stay married. Paul addresses first the unmarried and widows. This probably refers to people who were widows and widowers, but it may include all unmarried, even divorcees. It seems, however, to be dealing primarily with people who were once married and no longer are for whatever reason.

**MacArthur** feels this is primarily addressing divorcees writing that 1 Cor 7:8-9 "answer the question, "Should those who were married and divorced before becoming Christians remarry?" No doubt that was a key question in the Corinthian church. Formerly married people came to salvation in Christ and asked if they now had the right to marry someone else."

**But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good** (**kalos**) **for them if they remain even as I** - **NLT** - "It's better to stay unmarried." **Amplified** = "for them to remain [single] even as I do." Paul's point is that there are definite advantages to remaining single (unmarried) and that is **good** (**kalos**) which describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, and which provides some special or superior benefit, in this context referring to the superior benefit of singleness (**even as I am** - i.e. single). This reiterates "Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am" he had just stated in 1 Cor 7:7.

## Relate Resource:

- Example of the widow [Anna the prophetess](#) who remained single and serving the Lord zealously (Lk 2:36-38+)

**MacArthur** concludes that "The term **unmarried** indicates those who were previously married, but are not widows; people who are now single, but are not virgins. The unmarried woman, therefore, is a divorced woman."

**Arnold** - Paul thought it was honorable if they could stay single after being married. He was able to do this. Apparently God is able to give the gift of staying single to some after they have been married. If a person can stay single after the death of a mate or a divorce, this is good, honorable and OK with God, and no person should be looked down upon because of this position. Part of staying single is to keep oneself sexually pure. ([Advice About Marriage](#))

**if they remain even as I - IF** is a third class conditional clause in which the condition is viewed as possible.

**Unmarried** (22)(**agamos** from **a** = negation + **gámos** = marriage, wedding) means literally unmarried. John MacArthur analyzes the meaning based on the 4 uses in this chapter - "1 Cor 7:32 uses it in a way that gives little hint as to its specific meaning; it simply refers to a person who is not married. 1 Cor 7:34 uses it more definitively: "the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin." We assume Paul has two distinct groups in mind: whoever the unmarried are, they are **not virgins**. 1 Cor 7:8 speaks to "the unmarried and to widows," so we can conclude that the unmarried are **not widows**. The clearest insight comes in the use of the term in 1 Cor 7:10, 11: "the wife should not leave [divorce] her husband (but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried....)." The term **unmarried** indicates those who were previously married, but are not widows; people who are now single, but are not virgins. The **unmarried** woman, therefore, is a divorced woman."

**Agamos** - only 4x - 1 Co. 7:8; 1 Co. 7:11; 1 Co. 7:32; 1 Co. 7:34

**Remain** (Abide, continue, endure, stay) (3306)(**meno**) in simple terms means to remain in the same place or position over a period of time. It means to reside, stay, live, lodge, tarry or dwell. Menō describes something that remains where it is, continues in a fixed state, or endures. **Meno** can mean "to take up permanent residence" or "to make yourself at home." **Meno** is the root of the Greek noun mone which means mansion or habitation (Jn 14:2, 23). More than one half of the uses of **meno** are by John in his Gospel and letters.

**Meno** in the Corinthian letters (note concentration in 1 Corinthians 7) - 1 Co. 3:14; 1 Co. 7:8; 1 Co. 7:11; 1 Co. 7:20; 1 Co. 7:24; 1 Co. 7:40; 1 Co. 13:13; 1 Co. 15:6; 2 Co. 3:11; 2 Co. 3:14; 2 Co. 9:9;

**Was the Apostle Paul married?** - Because marriage seems to have been required for membership in the Sanhedrin, to which Paul may once have belonged, because he had been so devoutly committed to Pharisaic tradition (Gal. 1:14), and because he refers to one who could have been his wife's mother (Rom. 16:13), we may assume that he was once married. His statement here to the previously married confirms that—even as I. Likely he was a widower. He does not identify with the virgins but with the unmarried and widows, that is, with the formerly married. (MacArthur)

**1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.**

Amplified But if they have not self-control (restraint of their passions), they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame [with passion and tortured continually with ungratified desire].

Wuest But assuming that they are not able to exercise self-control in the realm of the continent life, let them marry, for it is more advantageous to marry than to continue to burn [with the heat of sexual passion]. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they do not have self-control, let them get married. For it is better to marry than to burn with sexual desire.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.



GNT 1 Corinthians 7:9 ε δ ο κ γκρατε ονται, γαμησ τωσαν, κρε πτον γ ρ στιν γαμ σαι πυρο σθαι.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:9 and if they have not continence -- let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they have not continency, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with desire.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:9 but if they cannot exercise self-control they should marry, for it is better to marry than to be on fire.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry, since it is better to be married than to be burnt up.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:9 However, if you cannot control your desires, you should get married. It is better for you to marry than to burn with sexual desire.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they have not self-control let them get married; for married life is better than the burning of desire.

- **let:** 1Co 7:2,28,36,39 1Ti 5:11,14
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## POTENTIAL EFFECT OF MARRIAGE ON SEXUAL IMMORALITY

**But** - Term of Contrast. Now he contrasts the potential pitfall of singleness in 1 Cor 7:8 warning it could also be bad if they gave in to their passions!

**If** - Condition of the first class, assumed as true. (See [Conditional statements](#))

**They do not have self-control, let them marry** - **Have self control** is in the present tense indicating self control was not to be sporadic but continual, something that is only possible in a person filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18+) allowing him/her to bear the fruit of self control ([egkrateia](#) in Gal 5:23+)! **Have self control** is in the middle voice which conveys a reflexive sense which means something like self-control over yourself. So if **self control** is lacking, Paul gives a clear and strong command to **marry**, the [aorist imperative](#) conveying even a sense of urgency! The idea is do not delay! Do this (**marry**) now!

**Have self control** (1467) [egkrateuomai](#) from [egkrates/enkrates](#) = self-controlled <> In turn from **en** = in + [kratos](#) = power from the stem **krat-** denoting power or lordship; cf [egkrateia](#)) means literally to control the strength of and thus depicts one who exercises power to "hold oneself in" or to "master self". This virtue describes "lordship" or dominion over self. The self-controlled individual exercises restraint over his own impulses, emotions, appetites and desires. Paul has the only other NT use of this verb later in this letter writing "Everyone who competes in the games **exercises self-control** in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable." (1 Corinthians 9:25+)

### Related Resources:

- [Temperance/Self-Control - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Self-Control - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [The Fruit of the Holy Spirit – What is self-control? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**For** ([gar](#)) term of explanation. The reason for the urgent command.

**It is better** ([kreiton/kreisson](#)) **to marry than to** (present tense - continually) **burn** ([puroo](#)) *with passion* - **Barclay** = "but if they find continence impossible, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to go on being inflamed with passion." **Amplified** = "it is better to marry than to be aflame [with passion and tortured continually with ungratified desire]." Paul's point is straightforward that which

singleness is good, if they are tempted to sin because of lack of self control, then marriage is better than having a "burning passion." In other words as with 1 Cor 7:2, he holds up marriage as a God given defense for the temptation to commit sexual immorality. So while Paul's preference was singleness, in this setting clearly marriage was the better choice.

**MacArthur** - A person cannot live a happy life, much less serve the Lord, if he is continually burning with sexual desire—even if the desire never results in actual immorality. And in a society such as Corinth's, or ours, in which immorality is so prevalent and accepted, it is especially difficult not to succumb to temptation.

It is fine to be on the lookout for the "right person,"  
but the best way to find the right person is to be the right person.

-- John MacArthur

**Arnold** - If a widow, widower or divorcee is not able to control his or her sex drive, it is advisable to marry. Paul is talking about "burning with passion," not burning in hell. If a person has been married but because of death or divorce has lost a mate and the sex drive has been awakened and there are sexual needs to be met, it is OK to get married. The Bible always stresses morality, it is never right to have an affair to satisfy sex drives. The Bible says that morality is to be maintained in the marriage relationship alone. Any sexual activity outside of marriage is sin. I believe this applies to young people in love as well. If two people love each other, yet financially are not in a position to get married, or if they have college before them, or some other barrier is standing in their way, then it is better to get married than enter into premarital sex. In marriage they can honor God, but in premarital sex they honor no one. Parents must be careful not to drive their child to premarital sex because they demand him or her to get through college before they marry. Wise parents will seek to give their child sound advice and encouragement not to marry but to control the sex drives, or if this seems impossible, to cool the relationship for awhile. If the child is going to get involved in premarital sex, then parents should encourage marriage and help all they can with moral and financial support through college. Anything is better than breaking God's moral law in premarital sex. Notice, however, Paul suggests it is better if a single person stays single for in so doing he or she can give themselves more fully to the Lord's work. It is much easier for older widows and widowers to stay single than for younger ones. Are you a widow, widower or divorcee? What are you doing for God? He has given you this time to serve Him as a single person, not to sit around and moan about how lonely you are. ([Advice About Marriage](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - Two possible explanations for the meaning of "to burn" have been offered: (1) If the statement is penal, then the idea is that lust leads to divine judgment. (2) Whereas this is certainly the case, it is more likely that the meaning here is this: if one discovers that he does not have the gift of [celibacy](#), it is preferable for him to marry rather than to seethe inwardly with destructive lusts. The italicized NKJV text "with passion" supports this latter interpretation.

**NET NOTE on to burn** - Grk "than to burn," a figure of speech referring to unfulfilled sexual passion.

**Keener on to burn** - "Burn" (NIV, NRSV and TEV interpret correctly by adding "with passion") was used throughout ancient romances to describe the arousal of passion, often (metaphorically) through Cupid's fiery darts. Whereas Greco-Roman literature in general saw nothing wrong with passion, Paul believes that its proper place is only in marriage, and he advocates two alternatives: either self-control or marriage. (Ibid)

**Marry** ([1060](#))([gameo](#)) means to take another person as spouse, marry; enter matrimony of both men and women. Friberg - (1) absolutely enter into marriage, marry (Mt 19.10); (2) of both sexes marry (1Ti 4.3); (3) of a woman marry (Mark 10.12); (4) passive get married, be married (Mk 10.12; 1Co 7.39)

**Gameo** is a key word in Chapter 7 occurring 7 times - 1 Co. 7:9; 1 Co. 7:10; 1 Co. 7:28; 1 Co. 7:33; 1 Co. 7:34; 1 Co. 7:36; 1 Co. 7:39

**Burn** ([4448](#)) [puroo](#) from [púr](#) = fire; cf [purosis](#)) means to be ignited or set on fire, to be kindled, to burn, to set on fire. In 1 Cor 7:9 it means to burn with sexual desire. Paul uses [puroo](#) figuratively in Eph 6:16 to describe "missiles" or "darts" undoubtedly referring to thoughts. Only 6v in the NT - 1 Co. 7:9; 2 Co. 11:29; Eph. 6:16; 2 Pet. 3:12; Rev. 1:15; Rev. 3:18

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**Question:** [What does it mean that it is better to marry than to burn in 1 Corinthians 7:9?](#)

**Answer:** 1 Corinthians 7:8–9 says, "Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." The King James version says simply "to burn," which has led to some misunderstanding. Some have speculated that the word *burn* refers to burning in hell; however, when we take the passage in context, we see Paul is saying that, even though singleness is his preference, it is not wrong to marry. In fact, for those with strong sexual urges, it is better to marry than to be consumed by unfulfilled desire.

Paul's statement that it is better to marry than to burn supports the Bible's strong stand against sexual immorality: if an unmarried

couple are burning with passion for each other, they need to *marry*, not give in to sin. Many try to justify sexual activities before [marriage](#) with excuses such as “we’re engaged” or “we love each other.” But the Bible makes no such allowances. In 1 Corinthians 7:1–2, Paul addresses the distinction between the married and the unmarried and states that sexual fulfillment is a primary reason for marriage: “Now for the matters you wrote about: ‘It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.’ But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.” Marriage is God’s plan for the fulfillment of sexual desires, and any sexual expression outside of marriage is sin (Hebrews 13:4).

[Sexual desires](#) blossom during puberty and increase as the body matures. The sexual desires themselves are not wrong. They are part of developing into a healthy man or woman. What we do about those desires determines whether or not they lead to sin. [James 1:13–15](#) explains the progression from the temptation to the sin: “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

With his assertion that it is better to marry than to burn, Paul sounds a warning for those caught in the progression toward sin. Long engagements, young teen dating, and “make out” sessions between dating couples are all ways that temptation can start “burning.” First Thessalonians 4:3–7 also addresses the need to control our passions: “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid [sexual immorality](#); that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.”

When we refuse to control our bodies in ways that are holy and honorable, we are in danger of allowing the natural sexual drive to turn into lust—or causing someone else to be filled with lust. This is especially true during late adolescence and the early twenties when hormones are raging and bodies are at their fittest. Sexual desire is at its peak, and the foolish or untaught often dive into sexual sin before they realize the lifelong consequences. God’s design is for those who “burn” with sexual desire to prayerfully seek a marriage partner and keep their desires under control until the wedding night. Those who can maintain moral purity should not feel pressured to marry. [Singleness](#) is a perfectly acceptable lifestyle. But, if one begins to “burn” with passion, it is time to seek God’s guidance in finding a spouse. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [What is sexual immorality? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about a Christian staying single? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Does the Bible teach that there is a gift of celibacy? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### 1Cor 7:9 If they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry.

According to the National & International Religion Report, before the majority of American marriages take place, the man and woman have already been living together. The report goes on to point out that this practice has devastating effects. “Marriages that are preceded by living together have 50 percent higher disruption (divorce or separation) rates than marriages without premarital cohabitation.”

The temptations were similar in the first century That’s why Paul had to make it clear to the believers at Corinth that they had no business being involved in sexual immorality. He said that if they found their passions becoming so strong that they could not control their sexual desires, there was an answer. It was not found in an immoral relationship; it was found in marriage.

In a day when immorality continues to devour people, let’s do all we can to promote the joys and privileges of love that is honoring to God—the love that is shared in marriage. There is no substitute for pure love.—J. D. Branon

SAVING YOURSELF FOR MARRIAGE WILL HELP TO SAVE YOUR MARRIAGE

#### 1 Corinthians 7:10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband

Amplified But to the married people I give charge—not I but the Lord—that the wife is not to separate from her husband.

Wuest But to those who have married I command, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not depart from her

husband, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:10 To the married I give this command— not I, but the Lord— a wife should not divorce a husband

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:10 But for those who are married, I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:10 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:10 το ς δ γεγαμηκ σιν παραγγ λλω, ο κ γ λλ κ ριος, γυνα κα π νδρ ς μ χωρισθ ναι,

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:10 and to the married I announce -- not I, but the Lord -- let not a wife separate from a husband:

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:10 But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:10 I command the married-- not I, but the Lord-- a wife is not to leave her husband.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:10 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:10 To the married I give this command-- not I but the Lord-- that the wife should not separate from her husband

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:10 To the married, however, I give this instruction (not I, but the Lord): a wife should not separate from her husband

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:10 To the married I give this ruling, and this is not mine but the Lord's: a wife must not be separated from her husband-

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:10 I pass this command along (not really I, but the Lord): A wife shouldn't leave her husband.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:10 But to the married I give orders, though not I but the Lord, that the wife may not go away from her husband

- **But to the married:** 1Co 7:12,25,40
- **Leave:** 1Co 7:15 Jer 3:20 Mal 2:14-16 Mt 5:32 19:6-9 Mk 10:11,12 Lu 16:18
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Malachi 2:14-16+ “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 “But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 16 “For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong,” says the LORD of hosts. “So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”

## INSTRUCTION ON DIVORCE

**Knofel Staton** writes that "Divorce in the first century was even more common than today. One first-century historian writes that people got married for the purpose of getting a divorce, and got divorced for the purpose of getting married again, it was not uncommon for a person to have been divorced and remarried several different times (**ED: SOME SOURCES SAY SOME MEN AND WOMEN GOT DIVORCED UP TO TWENTY TIMES!**)" (1 Corinthians).

**But to the married I give instructions** ([paraggello](#) - orders, directives), **not I, but the Lord** ([kurios](#)) - He is addressing Christians, both husband and wife, who have entered the covenant of marriage.

**Arnold** - Today we would ask the question, "Is it ever right for a Christian to divorce and remarry?" It is the same basic problem, just a different situation. What did the Lord Jesus Christ teach about divorce and remarriage? Jesus said the ideal marriage is one man for one woman for a lifetime. The Pharisees tried to trip Him up on the subject of marriage, for the prevalent thinking of that day was that a woman could be divorced for just about any cause. "Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason (Mt 19:3)?" Christ goes back to the ideal marriage, Adam and Eve, to show that it was never God's original purpose that divorce should interrupt a marriage.

And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?" 6 "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, **let no man separate** ([chorizo](#))." 7 They \*said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" 8 He \*said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. (Mt 19:4-8)

**Arnold** goes on to note that "While God hates divorce, He permits it because a perfect creation has been invaded by sin. Because of the stubborn, rebellious will of people, divorce was allowed by God, but it is not what He wants for man or woman, and divorce always falls into the [permissive will of God](#). **Hardness of heart** is a refusal to listen to God and a determination to go our way no matter what He says. Christ goes on to say the **only basis for divorce between a Christian man and woman is marital unfaithfulness** (sexual immorality). (Mt 19:9) The Greek word for "marital unfaithfulness" is [porneia](#) which is a word that could mean sexual unfaithfulness to one's mate, either of the opposite sex (heterosexual infidelity) or the same sex (homosexual infidelity). The innocent party has the right to file for divorce on the basis of unfaithfulness. Even if adultery is a basis for divorce, it does not mean that divorce is an automatic necessity when adultery occurs. The faithful mate has the option to leave, but this is not mandatory. Every attempt should be made to put the marriage back together again. The offending party must **repent**, and the offended party must **forgive**. If this is done, a marriage can go on to new heights of beauty, enjoyment and maturity. **Christians should remember that while divorce may dissolve a marriage, it seldom, if ever, solves the problems. In fact, divorce usually creates more problems than it solves.**

"And I say to you, whoever **divorces** ([apoluo](#)) his wife, except for **immorality** ([porneia](#)), and marries another woman **commits adultery** ([moichao](#))." (Mt 19:9)

#### **More from Jesus on divorce**

Matthew 5:32+; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 19:9 "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Mark 10:11-12+ And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; 12and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."

Luke 16:18+ "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.

**NET NOTE** on **not I but the Lord**- Here and in 1 Cor 6:12 Paul distinguishes between his own apostolic instruction and Jesus' teaching during his earthly ministry. In 1 Cor 6:10–11, Paul reports the Lord's own teaching about divorce (cf. Mark 10:5–12).

**Leave** (to separate, to part) ([5563](#)) [chorizo](#) from **choris** = separately, apart from, from) in the active sense means to cause to separate or divide, to put apart putting a space between. The emphasis of **chorizo** (especially in its literal uses) is on distance. In the passive sense, **chorizo** means to separate oneself (put some space between), to be separated, **Chorizo** is used in 1 Corinthians as the equivalent of divorce (see below). Although in modern terms we speak of separation as distinct from divorce but in the NT the use of **chorizo** in the context of marriage always carried the idea of divorce. **Chorizo** means to be at some distance from something (Paul left Athens or separated himself from Athens, Acts 18:1, cf similar use in Acts 1:4, 18:2) or someone (Philemon 1:15, cf Lxx uses Ezra 6:21, 9:1, Neh 9:2, 13:3). Jesus used **chorizo** in the Gospels to refer to the union of a man and woman which was not to be **separated**.

**Chorizo** - 11v - Matt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9; Acts 1:4; Acts 18:1; Acts 18:2; Rom. 8:35; Rom. 8:39; 1 Co. 7:10; 1 Co. 7:11; 1 Co. 7:15; Phlm. 1:15; Heb. 7:26

**That the wife should not leave her husband** - Notice that this teaching on divorce is from **the Lord** (see "[Jesus on divorce](#)" below) and is recorded by Paul.

**Utley** - Women did not have the right of divorce in Judaism, but they did in Roman society. Just because a given culture allows or disallows something does not mean that believers should avail themselves of the right or turn it into a taboo! Because one can does not mean one should (cf. Rom. 14:1–15:13).

**MacArthur** - Paul was not discussing divorce based on adultery, for which Jesus specifically affirmed provision (Matt. 5:32; 19:8–9). He was talking about divorce for other reasons, even supposedly spiritual ones.

**Arnold** - A Christian wife should not leave her husband **for any other reason than adultery**. Women in the church at Corinth were trying to leave their husbands so they would be more spiritual as a single person. God's perfect will is not to dissolve a marriage but that a marriage should be permanent. It is commanded that a woman should not divorce her husband. Paul did not include the "exception" clause given by Christ. Why? Because he is dealing with a particular problem of the Corinthians—the leaving of the marriage state for celibacy. It is assumed that the "exception" clause was known and accepted by all in the Corinthian church, but it had no relevance to the problem of the celibate state as being morally superior to the marriage state.

#### **Related Resources:**

- Covenant of Marriage
- [Divorce in Ancient Rome](#)
- [Marriage in ancient Rome - Wikipedia](#)

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#### **Jack Arnold gives a lengthy introduction the issue of divorce which Paul deals with in part in 1 Cor 7:10-16 -**

"I want out!" "Out of what," I replied? "I want out of my marriage of ten years," the woman replied. "Why do you want out?" I asked. She said, "My husband is not a Christian, well, he professes, but he doesn't act like a Christian; we have nothing in common." I asked her, "What grounds do you have for divorce?" She replied, "Incompatibility." And I said, "That is not a biblical grounds for divorce." She became quite defensive but after a while admitted she married her husband knowing full well he was not a spiritual man and there was some question about his salvation. Yet, he had a good job, a good salary and good looks. Now, ten years and three children later she was miserable. This scenario can be repeated multiple thousands of times over and could have been avoided had biblical principles been applied before marriage. But now, the situation is still salvageable if biblical principles will be applied.

Is it ever right for a Christian to get a divorce? For that matter, is it ever right for anyone, Christian or non-Christian to get a divorce? If divorce is permitted, is it ever right to remarry? In 1 Corinthians seven, the Apostle Paul gives advice on one aspect of divorce and remarriage -- the relationship of a Christian who is married to a non-Christian. He is not giving a full systematic theology on divorce and remarriage but is addressing a particular problem in the Corinthian local church. We also will only briefly touch on what the Lord Jesus taught about divorce, so I may not satisfy all your questions on this touchy subject. Divorce and remarriage is a controversial issue, and if we could get twenty-five of the best Christian scholars together to discuss this subject, we would have twenty-six different opinions. No matter what is taught in this sermon, I'm sure there will be some who do not agree. Let's learn to agree to disagree, and to love and respect one another even when we do not see eye to eye.

Christians who live in America are faced with tremendous pressures from the world on the subject of divorce. Statistics are staggering. Until just recently, two out of three marriages in the USA ended in divorce. The latest statistics is that the divorce rate is leveling off, but there is a reason for it. One of the reasons is that more and more people are not getting married but are just living with one another, so there are fewer and fewer divorces. It is obvious that our non-Christian culture in America accepts divorce as a practical solution to solving complex marital problems. The tragedy is even Christians are getting divorces at an alarming rate, and these divorces occur when biblical principles are either unknown, ignored or openly violated. The institution of marriage is being threatened with non-existence (or reinterpretation to make it politically correct), and people are hurting, so they take the easy road out and break up a marriage rather than endure the pain and grief of an unhappy one. Someone has said jokingly, "Compared with marriage, being born is a mere episode of life, and dying is a trivial incident." These are crucial days for Christians and we must, as never before, place our



beliefs on the Word of God, so we will not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Christians must insist any teaching on divorce and remarriage be grounded in the Bible and that a Christian ethic be accepted at all costs. If we do this, whatever position we take on divorce will not cause us to win a popularity contest. It is time for pastors and Christian workers to speak out on this subject because many a divorced person is grinding out his or her life under an enormous load of unnecessary guilt. Surely divorce is sin and any person who has gone through a divorce has paid a horrible, painful price. But divorce is like any other sin; it can be forgiven. Yet we must remember God said in Malachi 2:16, "I hate divorce." Therefore, whatever we teach on divorce and remarriage, we must see there will always be some stigma attached when a person is divorced and yet, at the same time, we should assure the divorcee God is merciful and compassionate, forgiving every sin.

What is happening in America today was happening in Corinth two thousand years ago. While divorce was rare in the first century Jewish community, it was an everyday occurrence among pagan Greeks and Romans. ([Advice About Marriage](#))

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#### John Bennett - 1 Corinthians 7:10 LET NOT THE WIFE DEPART

This command directly links with the Lord's teaching on this subject, 'yet not I, but the Lord'. The clear teaching of scripture is that marriage is for life and particularly so where believing couples are concerned. However, in verses 10–11, it seems the Lord allows separation, in extreme circumstances: where the husband's behaviour is such as to cause his wife's life to be intolerable because of physical or mental abuse.

In these verses it appears that married couples, where both partners are believers, are being addressed. This is apparent because those believers who have been saved and who have unbelieving partners are separately addressed in verses 13–16.

The scripture says 'but and if she depart', v. 11, it being left to the injured person in each case to decide before the Lord what is the right course. The degree of abuse, whether physical or mental, is not defined. It is well established that mental abuse can often be as injurious as physical, although the marks of the latter are often more evident.

For the wife to leave the husband is a very serious and undesirable step and must surely be an absolute last resort. This is why in verse 10 the injunction is 'let not the wife depart'. Every effort must be made, not only by the wife but by both parties, to save the marriage. Problems should be worked through, prayed over, solutions found, behavioural adjustments made, respect and kindness shown. The name of the Lord is at stake! If Christian couples split up, how will the testimony be affected and the Lord's name blasphemed?

Too often today, maybe because of the ease of divorce and the practices of the world at large, even some believers have a tendency to treat the vows they made before the Lord on their wedding day as of little consequence. Today's scripture should never be used as an excuse to separate on the basis of some petty problem or temporary difficulty. Things would need to be extremely serious in a marriage, and the problems ongoing, before separation could ever be contemplated. Remember, Christian couples set forth to a sinful and lost world the truth of Christ and His bride the church. (Day by Day Bible Commentary)

**1 Corinthians 7:11 (but if she does leave, she **must remain** unmarried, or else **be reconciled** to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.**

Amplified But if she does [separate from and divorce him], let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband. And [I charge] the husband [also] that he should not put away or divorce his wife.

Wuest but and if she depart, let her also remain unmarried or let her be reconciled to her husband. And the husband, let him not be putting away his wife. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:11 (but if she does, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband), and a husband should not divorce his wife.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:11 But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be reconciled to him. And the husband must not leave his wife.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:11 (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And

a husband must not divorce his wife.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:11 - ν ὃ κα χωρισθ , μεν τω γαμος τ νῶρ καταλλαγ τω,- κα νῶρα γυναικα μ φιναι.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:11 but and if she may separate, let her remain unmarried, or to the husband let her be reconciled, and let not a husband send away a wife.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:11 (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:11 But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband-- and a husband is not to leave his wife.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:11 (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:11 -- and if she does separate she must either remain single or become reconciled to her husband-- and a husband should not divorce his wife.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:11 or if she has already left him, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband -- and a husband must not divorce his wife.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:11 If she does, she should stay single or make up with her husband. Likewise, a husband should not divorce his wife.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:11 (Or if she goes away from him, let her keep unmarried, or be united to her husband again); and that the husband may not go away from his wife.

- **or else be reconciled:** Jdg 19:2,3 Jer 3:1
- **the husband should not divorce:** De 22:19 Isa 50:1 Mk 10:2
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TWO OPTIONS FOR BELIEVER WHO DIVORCES

In this specific context Paul gives two options to believers who divorces - stay single or reconcile. However keep in mind Paul is answering specific questions the saints at Corinth had sent him. And so he does not mention the exception Jesus allowed on the grounds of fornication (Mt. 5:32; Mt 19:9). Clearly in chapter 7 Paul does not intend this to be a systematic treatment of divorce.

**(but if she does leave (chorizo), she must remain (meno) unmarried (agamos), or else be reconciled to her husband)** - In other words the believing wife cannot remarry. The only alternative is reconciliation. Note these are not suggestions from Paul but two commandments, **must remain** in the [present imperative](#) (see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) and **be reconciled** in the [aorist imperative](#) (see [our need for Holy Spirit to obey](#)), the former calling for continual (lifelong) commitment and the latter conveying a sense of urgency (where passive voice is probably best viewed as a so-called divine passive, for reconciliation would need to be a supernatural, miraculous work of the Holy Spirit - see what the Spirit did in my marriage after about 10 years as a believer). In other words **reconciliation** refers to the transformation of a situation of hostility to a situation of peace and trust, here applied to the reconstitution of a faltering marriage.

**MacArthur** - If a Christian does divorce another Christian, except for adultery, **neither partner is free to marry another**. They must stay single or rejoin their former mate. In God's eyes that union has never been broken. These are not a counselor's suggestions, but the Lord's commands.

**Arnold** - It is obvious that two Christians should not divorce. However, the **"but"** tells us that sometimes this command is violated by sinful people. If a Christian wife chooses to leave her husband, she is to remain unmarried, or she may be reconciled to her husband. While a Christian wife is not to divorce her husband, she may legally separate from him due to unbearable circumstances. A Christian woman does not have to live with a man who beats her (usually because of alcohol or drugs), who abuses her physically or sexually or who mentally and emotionally rapes her. She may legally separate but she cannot remarry unless her husband commits adultery. A legal separation is not a divorce but a protection for the offended party.

**Be reconciled** (2644) **katallasso** from **katá** = an intensifier + **allásson** = change) means to exchange one thing for another and was used for example to describe the exchange of coins for others of equal value. This is its original meaning of to change, exchange, etc. transferred to mean to reconcile or to the exchange of hostility or enmity to a friendly relationship. It means to change a person for the purpose of being able to have fellowship together. **Reconciliation** produces **restoration** of a relationship of peace which has been disturbed. The Greeks spoke of people in opposition to each other being "**reconciled**" or being made friends again. When people change from being at enmity with each other to being at peace, they are said to be **reconciled**. **Katallasso** meant to legally reconcile two disputing parties in court and in the New Testament is used of a believer's reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

**Donald Barnhouse** on the Greek idea of **reconcile** - The Greek word translated "**reconciled**" comes from the world of the moneychanger. If you give two dimes and a nickel in exchange for a quarter, or vice versa, you have made an equal exchange. This was the original meaning of the word as used by Aristotle and others. Later the word was used for the adjustment of a difference in business dealings, and finally for a difference between two personalities who had become estranged. The transition from the material to the emotional and psychological was made, and the word was used as in Shakespeare's Richard III: "I desire to reconcile me to his friendly peace." (See the full message [Romans 5:9-10 Reconciliation](#))

**Katallasso** used only 5x in NT all by Paul and most of our reconciliation with God - Rom. 5:10; 1 Co. 7:11; 2 Co. 5:18; 2 Co. 5:19; 2 Co. 5:20

**And that the husband should not divorce his wife**- The believing husband is not to divorce his wife on a whim. While Paul does not repeat the instructions he gave to the believing wife, there is no doubt that he had the same two options, to remain single or to seek to reconcile the marriage. There is no option "C" allowing for him (or the believing wife) to re-marry again.

**Arnold** - A Christian man should not leave his Christian wife for any other reason than adultery. God intends marriage to be a permanent relationship. Christians are to be together for life. They vowed before God, to each other and before witnesses to stay together "for better or worse" and to "be faithful until death."...These verses tell us there is no divorce for Christians on the grounds of incompatibility, desertion, mental cruelty, physical abuse or whatever else the unsaved world may say are grounds. Christians are still sinful people and sometimes they get so far out of fellowship with Christ that it is impossible to live with them. One or both marriage partners can get into such a negative spiritual state that it is impossible for them to live together. They can legally separate but they cannot divorce except on the grounds of adultery. This is a very high standard and we Christians must maintain it at all costs. What about the Christian wife or husband who wants a divorce so badly that he or she manipulates the marriage (usually through the sex life) so that one's mate is pressured into committing adultery? The person then rationalizes that he or she has a solid reason for divorce. God will certainly judge any Christian who manipulates marriage for his or her own selfish ends. We may fool others, or our mates, or even ourselves, but God knows the motives of the human heart and He will judge accordingly.

**Divorce** (863)(**aphiemi** from **apo** = from, put distance between + **hiemi** = to send) means to dismiss or release someone or something (e.g., forgiveness is releasing someone from a "debt" so to speak) from a place or one's presence, to let go, to send away and in the present context means to divorce. Divorce is total marital separation, complete abandonment of the relationship. And so this same Greek word is used here in Romans of forgiveness of sins. When we are forgiven, our sins are put away from us, separated from us, "**divorced**" from us. In Mt 15:14 the same term is used to speak of separating ourselves from false teachers.

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### **John Bennett - 1 Corinthians 7:11 IF SHE DEPART, LET HER REMAIN UNMARRIED**

Here is a clear statement that shows how inviolable Christian marriage is. We have noticed in our thoughts on verse 10 that believing couples are being addressed in these verses. Only if the husband's behaviour has gone beyond the pale and he has abused his wife consistently should 'she depart' and, if she does finally make the decision to leave, then remarriage should never be contemplated whilst her husband lives. This would no doubt apply equally (but less commonly) where the position is the reverse and the wife has been guilty of the intolerable behaviour.

Some teach today that a partner who has been injured is 'the innocent party' and that therefore they are entitled to obtain a divorce and remarry. However, our scripture says 'let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband'—no exception being given. What could be clearer?

Even after the behaviour of the husband causes the wife to take the serious step of leaving, the Lord enjoins 'be reconciled'. In today's modern society, those who separate often do so with the set intention of never being reconciled. However, even if the intention is for the separation to be short term, the parties often become emotionally disengaged and new relationships may be entered into. In the world very few marriages are saved once separation occurs. Is this because, contrary to this scripture,

reconciliation is not considered?

It is accepted that when the behaviour of the other party has been extreme there needs to be evidence of true repentance and change before reconciliation can take place. If these things are in evidence, then the injured party should seek to be reconciled. This will take much grace not only on the part of the offended partner but also on the part of the one who has been guilty of the insufferable behaviour.

The word 'reconciled', Greek 'katallasso', carries the idea of mutual change from enmity to friendship. Reconciliation must be the chief objective if separation has taken place, for much is at stake: the happiness of the parties and the testimony of Christ in the circle of all those who know the couple. (Day by Day Bible Commands)

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### Question - [I am divorced. Can I remarry according to the Bible?](#)

**Answer:** We often receive questions like **'I am divorced for such and such a reason. Can I get remarried?'** "I have been divorced twice—the first for adultery by my spouse, the second for incompatibility. I am dating a man who has been divorced three times—the first for incompatibility, the second for adultery on his part, the third for adultery on his wife's part. Can we get married to each other?" Questions like these are very difficult to answer because the Bible does not go into great detail regarding the various scenarios for remarriage after a divorce.

What we can know for sure is that it is God's plan for a married couple to stay married as long as both spouses are alive (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6). **The only specific allowance for remarriage after a divorce is for adultery** (Matthew 19:9), **and even this is debated among Christians.** Another possibility is desertion—when an unbelieving spouse leaves a believing spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12–15). This passage, though, does not specifically address remarriage, only being bound to stay in a marriage. Instances of physical, sexual, or severe emotional abuse would be sufficient cause for separation, but the Bible does not speak of these sins in the context of divorce or remarriage.

We know two things for sure. [God hates divorce](#) (Malachi 2:16), and God is merciful and forgiving. Every divorce is a result of sin, either on the part of one spouse or both. Does God forgive divorce? Absolutely! Divorce is no less forgivable than any other sin. Forgiveness of all sins is available through faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7). **If God forgives the sin of divorce, does that mean you are free to remarry? Not necessarily. God sometimes calls people to remain single (1 Corinthians 7:7-8). Being single should not be viewed as a curse or punishment, but as an opportunity to serve God wholeheartedly (1 Corinthians 7:32-36).** God's Word does tell us, though, that it is better to marry than to burn with passion (1 Corinthians 7:9). Perhaps this sometimes applies to remarriage after a divorce.

So, can you or should you get remarried? We cannot answer that question. Ultimately, that is between you, your potential spouse, and, most importantly, God. The only advice we can give is for you to pray to God for wisdom regarding what He would have you do (James 1:5). Pray with an open mind and genuinely ask the Lord to place His desires on your heart (Psalm 37:4). Seek the Lord's will (Proverbs 3:5-6) and follow His leading. [GotQuestions.org](#)

### Related Resources all from [Gotquestions.org](#):

- [Is remarriage after divorce always adultery?](#)
- [What is the exception clause?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about divorce and remarriage?](#)
- [Does the Bible say anything about making a second marriage a success?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about remarriage if a divorce occurred before salvation?](#)

**1 Corinthians 7:12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.**

Amplified To the rest I declare—I, not the Lord [for Jesus did not discuss this]—that if any brother has a wife who does not believe [in Christ] and she consents to live with him, he should not leave or divorce her.

Wuest And to the rest I myself speak, not the Lord. Assuming that a certain brother has a wife who is an unbeliever and she herself is content to live with him, let him not be putting her away. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:12 To the rest I say— I, not the Lord— if a brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is happy to live with him, he should not divorce her.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:12 Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a Christian man has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:12 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:12 Το ς δ λοιπο ς λγω γ οχ κριος· ε τις δελφ ς γυνακα χει πιστον κα ατη συνευδοκε ο κε ν μετ ατο , μ φιτω ατ ν·

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:12 And to the rest I speak -- not the Lord -- if any brother hath a wife unbelieving, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him not send her away;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:12 But to the rest say I, not the Lord: If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:12 But I (not the Lord) say to the rest: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not leave her.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:12 But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:12 To the rest I say-- I and not the Lord-- that if any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:12 To the rest I say (not the Lord): if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she is willing to go on living with him, he should not divorce her;

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:12 For other cases these instructions are my own, not the Lord's. If one of the brothers has a wife who is not a believer, and she is willing to stay with him, he should not divorce her;

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:12 I (not the Lord) say to the rest of you: If any Christian man is married to a woman who is an unbeliever, and she is willing to live with him, he should not divorce her.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:12 But to the rest I say, and not the Lord; If a brother has a wife who is not a Christian, and it is her desire to go on living with him, let him not go away from her.

- **to the rest I say:** 1Co 7:6,25 2Co 11:17
- **If:** Ezr 10:2,3,11-19
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ADVICE TO A SPIRITUALLY MIXED MARRIAGE

**But to the rest I say, not the Lord-** Do not misinterpret Paul. He is not saying what he writes is not inspired, but only that this is something about which the Lord Himself did not teach.

**Vine on to the rest** - he now speaks to those who had married before their conversion and who now had either an unconverted wife or an unconverted husband.

**Uttley on to the rest** - This would refer to previously married pagan couples in which one partner had become a believer. This cannot be used as a proof text for a believer marrying an unbeliever. This refers to a situation where both were originally unbelievers. One had received Christ and hopefully, in time, so would the other (cf. v. 16).

**Jamieson on to the rest** - those involved in mixed marriages with unbelievers.

**Baker** writes that "Having dealt with the unmarried generally in 7:8–9 and those married generally in 7:10–11, Paul in 7:12–16 addresses a special circumstance in marriage created by the infusion of the gospel into Corinthian culture: husbands or wives who converted to Christianity without their spouses." (Cornerstone Bible Commentary)

**Albert Barnes** on **to the rest** - "The rest," or remainder, here referred to, relates particularly to the cases in which one party was a Christian and the other not. In the previous verses he had delivered the solemn, explicit law of Christ, that divorce was to take place on neither side, and in no instance, except agreeably, to the law of Christ; Matthew 5:32. That was settled by divine authority. In the subsequent verses he discusses a different question; whether a "voluntary separation" was not advisable and proper when the one party was a Christian and the other not. The word "rest" refers to these instances, and the questions which would arise under this inquiry.

**Robertson** on **not the Lord** - Paul has no word about marriage from Jesus beyond the problem of divorce. This is no disclaimer of inspiration. He simply means that here he is not quoting a command of Jesus.

**Comment** - I agree with A T Robertson. It is sad that **Albert Barnes** who I quote above and who is usually very astute in his observations and comments is mistaken in his comment which paraphrases what Paul is saying with the phrase **I say not the Lord**. Barnes paraphrases it "*I do not claim, in this advice, to be under the influence of inspiration....*" That is an erroneous interpretation and a unfortunately a flat out denial of [verbal plenary inspiration](#)! This example is given not to disparage Barnes, but to motivate every Bible student to first carry out their own **Inductive Bible Study** under the leading of the Holy Spirit for then they will be equipped to accurately *comment on the commentaries* (aka good "Bereans" - Acts 17:11+).

**MacArthur** on **not the Lord** - That is not a denial of inspiration or an indication that Paul is only giving his own human opinion. It is only to say that God had not given any previous revelation on the subject, but Paul was now setting it forth

**Utley** - "This is not a disclaimer of inspiration by Paul, but simply a recognition that Paul did not know about any teachings of Jesus on this particular issue. "

**Jack Arnold** - Now Paul is going to give marriage advice which the Lord Jesus Himself never taught on. It is the problem of one unsaved and one saved partner in a marriage. In the Corinthian church, there were husbands and wives who had been gloriously saved by the grace of a sovereign God, but their mates were still rejecters of Jesus Christ. According to Ezra 9 and 10, the Israelites were told to divorce their unbelieving mates whom they had married while in captivity in Babylon and any other Gentile partners they had acquired from the surrounding nations. Haggai 2 says that defilement was carried through touching a dead body, and the Jews and Gentile believers interpreted this to mean defilement is communicated or transmitted. Are Christians, therefore, defiled when married to unbelievers? The Corinthian Christians asked the honest question, "Should I divorce my unbelieving husband or wife to keep pure and stay in a celibate state to be more spiritual?" This section is not viewing willful, rebellious marriages where a Christian says, 'I'm going to marry that unbeliever because I love him or her, and I don't care what the Bible says!' This is another problem in itself. I know countless Christians who defied the wisdom of parents, of preachers, of friends and God and married an unbeliever (**ED: I KNOW ONE - MY BELIEVING SON MARRIED AN UNBELIEVER AND IT WAS AN ABSOLUTE NIGHTMARE SO THEY GOT DIVORCED, WHICH BROKE MY HEART AND WAS ESPECIALLY PAINFUL BECAUSE I WAS THE BEST MAN IN THE WEDDING!**). These people are generally miserable and their marriages most often end in divorce. Paul is not addressing this problem but is addressing when both husband and wife are unsaved and then one partner gets saved and the other remains a rejecter of the Lord Jesus Christ. ([Advice About Marriage](#))

**That if** (first class condition - this following was true in Corinth) **any brother** ([adelphos](#)) **has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she** (present tense - continually) **consents to** (present tense - continually) **live with him, he must not divorce** ([aphiemi](#)) **her - Must not divorce** is a command in the [present imperative with a negative](#) implying that such a practice was already going on among the saints at Corinth but that it was strictly prohibited! Paul commands this practice to cease. A believing husband is not to divorce his wife if she wants to stay in the marriage.

**Vine** - this of course affords no sanction of the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever. The prohibition of this is given in 1 Cor 7:39+. The word rendered "is content" (consents) indicates mutual consent, both parties agreeing

**Arnold** - Christians often rationalize and say, "I was married to my mate before I became a Christian. Now that I am a Christian I do not believe my marriage was made in heaven; therefore, it is not valid. I think I ought to be able to get a divorce and establish a real Christian home." Not so, because God acknowledges marriage as valid for unbelievers as well as believers. It may be tough to live with an unbeliever, but God's grace is sufficient. How many Christian wives there were in Corinth who had to live with husbands who would get stinking drunk and commit sexual acts with prostitutes at the Temple of Aphrodite? How many Christian husbands in Corinth had to live with unsaved wives who thought, acted, and lived like thoroughgoing pagans, scoffing at them whenever they showed any interest in spiritual things? Some of these Christians were so discouraged they wanted to abandon their marriages, but Paul says, "Don't do it! Hang in there and keep the marriage together!" **Paul's point is that the Christian is never to initiate a divorce with an unbelieving partner.**

**Unbeliever** (571) [apistos](#) from **a** = without + [pistos](#) = believing, faithful) means lacking in faith, without faith,



disbelieving, unbelieving - in this [context](#) **apistos** is one who does not believe the Good News about Jesus Christ (1Ti 5:8, Titus 1:15, Rev 21:8). It is used once to describe that which is incredible (Acts 26:8), but most NT uses describe those without faith, not trusting, unfaithful. Paul repeatedly used **apistos** in his letters to the church at Corinth because of their great need to understand how to interact with unbelievers (1Co 6:6; 7:12,13,14; 10:27; 14:22, 23 24; 2Co 6:14 15).

**Apistos** is used 21v, most often in the Corinthian letters - Matt. 17:17; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 9:41; Lk. 12:46; Jn. 20:27; Acts 26:8; 1 Co. 6:6; 1 Co. 7:12; 1 Co. 7:13; 1 Co. 7:14; 1 Co. 7:15; 1 Co. 10:27; 1 Co. 14:22; 1 Co. 14:23; 1 Co. 14:24; 2 Co. 4:4; 2 Co. 6:14; 2 Co. 6:15; 1 Tim. 5:8; Tit. 1:15; Rev. 21:8

**Consents** (4909) [suneudokeo](#) from [sun](#) = together with + **eu** = good + **dokéo** = think) literally means to "think well with", and so to consent or to give hearty approval to something (cf Lk 11:48). It means to join in approval, agree with, approve of, consent to or sympathize with. Used only 6x in the NT - Lk. 11:48; Acts 8:1; Acts 22:20; Rom. 1:32; 1 Co. 7:12; 1 Co. 7:13

**Live** (dwell) (3611) [oikeo](#) from **oikos** = home) means to live, inhabit or dwell in a certain place as one's home. To inhabit a house. **Oikeo** is speaks of dwelling often with a figurative sense - sin (Ro 7:17), Spirit (1Cor 3:16), marriage partners (1Cor 7:12).

#### Related Resource:

- [What should a Christian do if he or she is married to an unbeliever? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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### 1 Corinthians 7:12–16; 1 Peter 3:1–2 FOR WHAT KNOWEST THOU, O WIFE, WHETHER THOU SHALT SAVE THY HUSBAND?

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ divides people. As He expressed it, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household', Matt. 10:34–36. Sometimes the good news comes to a family and every member receives it, Acts 16:31–34. As the above-quoted verse from Matthew indicates, on other occasions some believe and others reject it. 1 Corinthians chapter 7 envisages the scenario of a married couple divided: one is born again, the other is not. Certainly, this poses real difficulties for the Christian spouse; nevertheless, the Lord can still work in such mixed marriages to bring the lost member to Christ.

The question at the top of the page particularly contemplates the believing wife's situation. If her unbelieving husband chooses to leave, she cannot prevent him, 1 Cor. 7:15; nonetheless, if he wants to remain married she is to stay in the relationship, v. 13. Beyond the issue of remaining together or not, the Christian wife can influence the relationship in a way that brings about a change in her man. 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 1–2 instructs her regarding her significant method of persuasion, 'Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wife; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear'. If he does not listen to the scriptures, there can still be a wordless testimony, as he sees his godly wife submitting to him. Her pure and respectful behaviour may induce him to consider the change that God has made in her life since she received Christ. Conversely, if she is insubordinate, unfaithful, or cantankerous, this would dissuade him from any further interest in the gospel. Living together in such intimacy provides the Christian woman with an unparalleled witnessing opportunity. She has the quiet power to lead him to the Lord by letting His light shine through her life. (Ken Totten - Day by Day: Bible Questions)

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#### Question: [Are the writings of the Apostle Paul inspired \(1 Corinthians 7:12\)?](#)

**Answer:** The bulk of conservative evangelical Christianity believes in what is called the [verbal plenary inspiration](#) of Scripture, meaning that every single word of the Bible is "breathed out" by God (2 Timothy 3:16). If biblical critics can claim that 1 Corinthians 7:12 is not inspired, but rather Paul's opinion, what other passages could they claim to be the opinion of the human author and not the commands of the divine Author? This strikes at the very heart of biblical authority.

Paul wrote this first letter to a group of Christians dwelling in the [city of Corinth](#), a very corrupt city. Part of that corruption was due to the temple of Aphrodite, which was home to over 1,000 temple prostitutes who plied their trade on behalf of their deity. It was in this setting that Paul founded the church at Corinth. In fact, many of the congregation came out of the immoral Corinthian lifestyle. The church of Corinth was made up of ex-fornicators, ex-idolaters, ex-adulterers, ex-homosexuals, ex-thieves, and ex-drunkards.

With that as a backdrop, when Paul gets into chapter 7 of his letter, he is answering a question the church had regarding sexual relations between men and women. Given the social climate in Corinth, the Corinthians thought it would be a good thing for everyone to remain celibate. Paul agrees that celibacy is a good thing and even states that he wishes more people could be celibate

as he was. Paul is not down on marriage. All he is doing is stating the obvious benefits that singleness affords for ministry opportunities. However, Paul mentions that singleness is a gift from God, and not all have the gift (v. 7). For those who are currently married, Paul tells them to remain so, and in v. 10 Paul says “not I, but the Lord.” This means that what Paul is telling the Corinthians is a direct command from Jesus. This command comes from Jesus’ teaching in the gospels, in particular, Matthew 5:32.

Finally, in v. 12, Paul addresses “mixed marriages”—those between a Christian and a non-Christian. Given the prevailing environment, Christians might be tempted to divorce their unbelieving spouses, thinking that somehow by doing so they are purifying themselves. Paul tells the believing spouse to remain with the unbeliever, with the comment that the command comes from him, not Jesus. But Paul is not offering his own opinion here. What he is saying is that Jesus never addressed this issue directly during His earthly ministry. If we search the Gospels, we will not see any direct teaching of Jesus that addresses the situation of a believing spouse married to an unbelieving spouse. But Jesus did give only one legitimate reason for divorce (Matthew 5:32; 19:19), and being married to an unbeliever was not it.

So the best answer is to see Paul as providing new revelation regarding an area that Jesus did not specifically address. That is why Paul says, “I, not the Lord.” In other words, I, not Jesus, am giving you this command, although it is based on the principles Jesus taught. As extensive as Jesus’ ministry was, He did not articulate everything regarding the Christian life. That is why He commissioned the apostles to carry on His ministry after His ascension, and that is why we have a God-breathed Bible, “so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). Paul was responsible for much new revelation, although ultimately those revelations came from the Holy Spirit. In many of his epistles, Paul reveals to us “mystery.” The word “mystery” is a technical term that signifies some previously unrevealed truth that is now revealed, such as the church being made up of both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 11:25) or the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Paul is simply giving us additional revelation regarding marriage that Jesus didn’t elaborate on. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**1 Corinthians 7:13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.**

Amplified And if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he consents to live with her, she should not leave or divorce him.

Wuest And the wife who is such that she has an unbelieving husband, and this husband is content to live with her, let her not be putting her husband away, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is happy to live with her, she should not divorce him.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:13 And if a Christian woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:13 If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:13 κα̅ γυν̅ ε̅ τις̅ χει̅ ν̅δ̅ρα̅ πιστον̅ κα̅ ο̅ το̅ς̅ συν̅ευ̅δο̅κε̅ ο̅ κε̅ ν̅ με̅τ̅ α̅ τ̅ς̅, μ̅ φι̅τω̅ τ̅ ν̅ ν̅δ̅ρα̅.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:13 and a woman who hath a husband unbelieving, and he is pleased to dwell with her, let her not send him away;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:13 And the woman that hath an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:13 Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not leave her husband.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:13 And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with

her, she should not divorce him.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:13 and if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to go on living with her, she should not divorce her husband.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:13 and if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to stay with her, she should not divorce her husband.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:13 If any Christian woman is married to a man who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to live with her, she should not divorce her husband.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a Christian, and it is his desire to go on living with her, let her not go away from her husband.

- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S COMMAND TO BELIEVING WIVES WITH UNBELIEVING HUSBANDS

**And a woman who** (is herself a believer) **has an unbelieving** ([apistos](#)) **husband, and he** (present tense - continually) **consents** ([suneudokeo](#)) **to** (present tense - continually) **live** ([oikeo](#)) **with her, she must not send her husband away** ([aphiemi](#)) - As in the preceding passage **Must not send...away** is a command in the [present imperative with a negative](#) implying that such a practice was already going on among the saints at Corinth. Paul commands it to stop.

**MacArthur** - Christians married to unbelievers were not to worry that they themselves, their marriage, or their children would be defiled by the unbelieving spouse. On the contrary, the very opposite was the case. Both the children and the unbelieving spouse would be sanctified through the believing wife or husband. The sanctification is matrimonial and familial, not personal or spiritual. In God's eyes a home is set apart for Himself when the husband, wife, or, by implication, any other family member, is a Christian. Such a home is not Christian in the full sense, but it is immeasurably superior to one that is totally unbelieving. Even if the Christian is ridiculed and persecuted, unbelievers in the family are blessed because of that believer. One Christian in a home graces the entire home. God's indwelling that believer and all the blessings and graces that flow into the believer's life from heaven will spill over to enrich all who are near. In addition, although the believer's faith cannot suffice for the salvation of anyone but himself, he is often the means of other family members coming to the Lord by the power of his testimony.

**ILLUSTRATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE** - When God was about to destroy Sodom, Abraham pleaded with Him to spare the city if fifty righteous people lived there. "So the Lord said, 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account' " (Gen. 18:26). When that many could not be found, the patriarch reduced the number to forty-five, then to forty, thirty, twenty, and finally ten. In each case the Lord agreed to spare the city, but not even ten righteous could be found. But God was willing to bless many wicked people for the sake even of a few of His own people in their midst. (MacArthur)

Don't miss the fact that four times in 1 Cor 7:10-13, Paul prohibits divorce. Paul is not stuttering! He wants the Corinthians to get the message clearly.

**Keener** - Because most first-generation Christians were converted after marriage (which was generally arranged by parents), this text is no indication that Christians knowingly choose marriages with pagans. (Ibid)

**1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.**

Amplified For the unbelieving husband is set apart (separated, withdrawn from heathen contamination, and affiliated with the Christian people) by union with his consecrated (set-apart) wife, and the unbelieving wife is set apart and separated through union with her consecrated husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean (unblessed heathen, outside the Christian covenant), but as it is they are prepared for God [pure and clean].

Wuest for the husband who is an unbeliever has been sanctified by virtue of his association with his wife in her position as a saved individual [this sanctification being in the marriage relation, that marriage being declared holy by reason of the Christian standing of the wife]. And the unbelieving wife has been sanctified by

virtue of her association with her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean. But now they are holy. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified because of the wife, and the unbelieving wife because of her husband. Otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the Christian wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the Christian husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not be holy, but now they are holy.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:14 γ α σ τ α ι γ ρ υ ρ π ι σ τ ο ς ν τ γ υ ν α ι κ κ α γ α σ τ α ι γ υ ν π ι σ τ ο ς ν τ δ ε λ φ · π ε ρ α τ τ κ ν α μ ν κ θ α ρ τ σ π ι ν , ν ν δ γ ι σ π ι ν .

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:14 for the unbelieving husband hath been sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife hath been sanctified in the husband; otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is set apart for God by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is set apart for God by the husband. Otherwise your children would be corrupt, but now they are set apart for God.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through the brother. Otherwise your children would be unclean, whereas in fact they are holy.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:14 You see, the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through the brother. If this were not so, your children would be unclean, whereas in fact they are holy.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:14 Actually, the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and an unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise, their children would be unacceptable to God, but now they are acceptable to him.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:14 For the husband who has not faith is made holy through his Christian wife, and the wife who is not a Christian is made holy through the brother: if not, your children would be unholy, but now are they holy.

- **the unbelieving husband:** 1Co 6:15-17 Ezr 9:1,2 1Ti 4:5 Tit 1:15
- else: Ezra 9:2 Isa 52:1 Mal 2:15,16 Ac 10:23 Ro 11:16
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For ([gar](#)) term of explanation.

**The unbelieving ([apistos](#)) husband is sanctified [hagiazō](#)** in perfect tense = state of sanctification, being set apart) **through his wife** - The Amplified on **sanctified** says "separated, withdrawn from heathen contamination." **Sanctified** is first word in Greek and thus is emphatic. It is not speaking of spiritual setting apart or sanctification in the sense it was used in 1 Cor 1:30+ of those who had placed their faith in Christ. I think of it more as a "leaven like" effect of the moral holiness of the believing wife on the unbelieving husband.

**Vine** - this does not imply a change of moral quality or a change of the spiritual state in regard to God in respect of the unbelieving

**Baker** writes that " In 1 Cor 7:14, Paul shows that he viewed the marriage union inversely from the ways pagans or Jews viewed it. One rotten apple does not automatically spoil the one next to it. Rather than believing that the purity of the marriage is contaminated by the unbelieving partner, Paul believed the purity of the marriage was enhanced by the believing partner. Robertson and Plummer (1911:142) explain this well: "The purity of the believing partner overpowers the impurity of the unbelieving one."(Cornerstone Bible Commentary)

**And the unbelieving ([apistos](#)) wife is sanctified ([hagiazō](#) in perfect tense = state of sanctification) through her believing husband ([adelphos](#))** - Paul is not saying the wife or the children necessarily become holy in character as were the believers in Corinth (1 Cor 1:2+ = [hagios](#)), but that they were separated in a sense from unholy worldly influences and were exposed to the "holy" influences of the believer. In the absence of a believer in a household, the sole influence would be the unholiness of the evil world system.

**Robertson and Plummer** on **sanctified through** which is more literally *sanctified in (en)* - Note the *v (en)* in both cases; the Christian partner is the sphere in which the sanctification takes place, and the heathen partner may be influenced by that sphere.

**MacArthur** - This does not refer to salvation; otherwise the spouse would not be spoken of as unbelieving. The sanctification is matrimonial and familial, not personal or spiritual, and means that the unsaved partner is set apart for temporal blessing because the other belongs to God. One Christian in a marriage brings grace that spills over on the spouse—even possibly leading them to salvation. (Study Bible)

#### Related Resource:

- [1 Corinthians 7 A Sanctified Spouse](#) - Questions/Answers from John MacArthur
- [What should a Christian do if he or she is married to an unbeliever? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Otherwise your children are unclean ([akathartos](#) - impure), but now they are holy ([hagios](#) - set apart)** - **NLT** Paraphrases it "For the Christian wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the Christian husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not have a godly influence, but now they are set apart for him." The children are **holy** ([hagios](#)), not in a saved sense, but in the sense that by virtue of the influence of the godly parent on the household, they are separated from (at least to some degree) the corrupting evil influences of the fallen world system under the dominion of Satan. With one believer in the household, there is one person with Christ in them and the Spirit in them, and these supernatural holy influences counter and override (so to speak) the unholy influences of the world.

**Swindoll** - when a Christian spouse stays with the willing non-Christian partner, the children also benefit. Children raised in a mixed home have greater opportunity to see the love of Christ exhibited in the believing parent's life than those who must live with the consequences of a broken home.

**MacArthur** on **otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy** - The Christian need not separate from an unbeliever because of fear that the unbelieving spouse may defile the children. God promises the opposite. They would be **unclean** if both parents were unsaved, but the presence of one believing parent exposes the children to blessing and brings them protection. The presence of even one Christian parent will protect children from undue spiritual harm and they will receive many blessings, and often that includes salvation.

**ILLUSTRATION** - A young woman came up to me after the service one Sunday morning and told me that when she was growing up her grandmother was the only Christian in the family. The grandmother used to speak of her love for Christ and witnessed to the family in what she said and by what she did. Eventually, three of the four grandchildren came to know the Lord, and each one declared that their grandmother had the greatest influence on their decision for Christ. (John MacArthur)

**Keener** has an interesting insight - Both Greco-Roman and Jewish law debated the status of children of socially mixed unions; Jewish law also debated the status of children of religiously mixed unions. Here Paul argues that children of religiously mixed unions are within the sphere of gospel influence and cannot be used as an excuse for divorce. In Roman society, the children normally went to the father in the event of a divorce; a Christian wife involved in a divorce would lose her opportunity to influence her children for God. (Ibid)

**Sanctified** (hallow) ([37](#)) [hagiazō](#) from [hagios](#) = holy, set apart) conveys the primary meaning of "to set apart or to consecrate," but it also can convey the thought of the resultant holiness of character in the consecrated. [Hagiazō](#) was used in 1 Cor 1:2+ "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling...." [Hagiazō](#) was used to describe their conversion experience in 1 Cor 6:11

"but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

**Related Resource:**

- R C Sproul - [1 Corinthians 7:14 Holy Children](#)
- Paul is not speaking about salvation per se - [What does the Bible say about household salvation?](#)

**1 Corinthians 7:15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.**

Amplified But if the unbelieving partner [actually] leaves, let him do so; in such [cases the remaining] brother or sister is not morally bound. But God has called us to peace.

Wuest But assuming that the unbelieving husband departs, let him be departing. A [Christian] brother or [Christian] sister is not in the position of a slave, namely, bound to the unbelieving husband or unbelieving wife in an indissoluble union in cases such as these; but God has called us [to live] in peace. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbeliever wants a divorce, let it take place. In these circumstances the brother or sister is not bound. God has called you in peace.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:15 (But if the husband or wife who isn't a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is no longer bound to the other, for God has called you to live in peace.)

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:15 ε δ πιστος χωρ ζεται, χωριζ σθω· ο δεδο λωται δελφ ς δελφ ν το ς τοιο τοις· ν δ ε ρ ν κ κληκεν μ ς θε ς.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:15 And, if the unbelieving doth separate himself -- let him separate himself: the brother or the sister is not under servitude in such cases, and in peace hath God called us;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:15 Yet if the unbelieving departeth, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:15 If the unbeliever separates, however, let him separate. The brother or sister is not bound in such cases; God has called you to peace.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbeliever chooses to leave, then let the separation take place: in these circumstances, the brother or sister is no longer tied. But God has called you to live in peace:

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbelieving partners leave, let them go. Under these circumstances a Christian man or Christian woman is not bound by a marriage vow. God has called you to live in peace.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the one who is not a Christian has a desire to go away, let it be so: the brother or the sister in such a position is not forced to do one thing or the other: but it is God's pleasure that we may be at peace with one another.



- **brother**: Mt 12:50 Jas 2:15
- **but**: 1Co 14:33 Ro 12:18 14:19 2Co 13:11 Ga 5:22 Heb 12:14 Jas 3:17,18
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WHEN THE UNBELIEVING SPOUSE LEAVES

Under Palestinian Jewish law, women could be divorced by a unilateral act of the husband; under Roman law, either party could divorce the other.

**Yet if the unbelieving ([apistos](#)) one leaves ([chorizo](#)), **let him leave** ([chorizo](#) in [present imperative](#)); the brother ([adelphos](#)) or the sister is not under bondage in such cases - NET = "if the unbeliever wants a divorce, let it take place." NLT - "(But if the husband or wife who isn't a Christian insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is not required to stay with them, for God wants his children to live in peace.)" Note that that the Greek word for **leaves** ([chorizo](#)) refers to two things that are severed or divided, in this case two people in the marriage covenant. Paul describes the situation where the unbeliever willfully leaves the believing spouse. One can imagine them saying "I can't handle your Jesus talk any more, so I am leaving!" Note it is the unbeliever initiating the action, in effect filing for divorce, not the believer!**

**ILLUSTRATION** - A Cape Town brain surgeon put it very well. When asked what he found so difficult about his wife's new-found faith in Christ, he stressed two things: first, she was no longer the person with whom he had originally fallen in love and whom he had decided to marry; secondly, there was another Man about the house, to whom she was all the time referring her every decision and whom she had to consult for his advice and instructions. He was no longer the boss in his own house: Jesus gave the orders and set the pace. (Arnold)

**MacArthur on not under bondage** - In God's sight the bond between a husband and wife is dissolved only by **death** (Rom. 7:2+), **adultery** (Matt. 19:9), and an **unbeliever's leaving**. **When the bond, or bondage, is broken in any of those ways, a Christian is free to remarry.** Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is assumed. **Where divorce is permitted, remarriage is permitted.**

**Morris on not under bondage** - This appears to mean that the deserted partner is free to remarry; it would be a curious expression to use if Paul meant 'is bound to remain unmarried'.

**Arnold on not under bondage** - When Paul is talking about "not bound" he is referring to a legitimate divorce and the right to remarry on the basis of desertion.

**Swindoll on not under bondage** - In other words, the child of God is no longer bound to that marriage relationship. That believer then falls into the category of the "unmarried" person (7:8)—free to marry a fellow believer "in the Lord" (7:39), but urged to remain single for the sake of an undistracted ministry.

**Keener** - "Not under bondage" or "not bound" alludes to the wording of Jewish divorce documents, which told the woman, "You are free to remarry any man," and further applied to divorce the precise language of freedom from slavery. Being "bound" would mean that she was still married in God's sight; not being "bound," or being "free," meant that she was free to remarry. (Ibid)

**William MacDonald on not under bondage** - The expression "a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases" is very difficult to explain with finality. Some believe that it means that if the unbeliever deserts the believer, and there is every reason to believe that the desertion is final, then the believer is free to obtain a divorce. Those who hold this view teach that verse 15 is a parenthesis, and that verse 16 is connected with verse 14 as follows:

1. Verse 14 states that the ideal situation is for a believer to remain with an unbelieving partner because of the sanctifying influence of a Christian in the home.
2. Verse 16 suggests that through staying in the home, the believer may win the unbeliever to Christ.
3. Verse 15 is a parenthesis, allowing the believer to be divorced (and possibly to remarry) if he or she is deserted by the unbeliever.

The hope of eventual salvation is connected with continued union rather than with the unbeliever's leaving the home.

But other Bible students insist that verse 15 deals only with the subject of separation and not with divorce and remarriage. To them, it simply means that if the unbeliever departs, he should be allowed to do so peacefully. The wife is not under any obligation to keep the marriage together beyond what she has already done. God has called us to peace, and we are not required to use emotional displays or legal processes to prevent the unbeliever from departing. **Which is the right interpretation?** We find it impossible to decide definitely. It does seem to us that the Lord taught in Matthew 19:9 that divorce is permitted where one party has been guilty of unfaithfulness (adultery). We believe that in such a case, the innocent party is free to remarry. As far as 1 Corinthians 7:15 is concerned, we cannot be positive that it permits divorce and remarriage where an unbeliever has deserted his Christian partner.

However, anyone who is guilty of this form of desertion will almost inevitably enter into a new relationship very soon, and thus the original union will be broken anyway. J. M. Davies writes: "*The unbeliever who departs would very soon be married to another, which would automatically break the marriage bond. To insist that the deserted party remain unmarried would put a yoke upon him/her which in the majority of cases, they would not be able to bear.*" (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Henry Morris** - If the unbelieving husband or wife chooses to leave the relationship, there remains nothing the believer can do. The Christian spouse should remain unmarried (1Co 7:11) as long as there is any possibility of reconciliation. Otherwise he or she "is not under bondage"-- that is, no longer bound by the law to remain with the other spouse. The situation seems analogous to that in which one partner dies. "If the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband...so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Ro7:2,3). Once the ex-husband or ex-wife marries another, then the previous marriage relation is as permanently severed as if it had been severed by death, with no further possibility of reconciliation. When that becomes the case, it seems plain that there is no further "bondage" of any sort, so that the believer is free to remarry--but only "in the Lord" (1Co7:39). (Defender's Study Bible)

**Thomas Constable** - When the unbeliever departs, the Christian is no longer under bondage (Gr. *douleuo*, lit. to be a slave). Does this refer to bondage to hold the marriage together or bondage to remain unmarried? Most of the commentators believe it means that the Christian is free to let the unbeliever depart; he or she does not have an obligation to maintain the marriage (Robertson and Plummer, p. 143; Fee, *The First . . .*, pp. 302-3.). Among these some hold that the believer is not free to remarry (cf. v. 11) (E.g., William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*). Most of these believe that the Christian is free to remarry. (E.g., Barrett, p. 166; Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians, p. 70; Lenski, pp. 294-95; David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, p. 518; Morris, p. 111.) The Greek text does not solve this problem. I think Paul was not addressing the idea of remarrying here. I would counsel a Christian whose unsaved spouse has divorced him or her to remain unmarried as long as there is a possibility that the unsaved person may return. However if the unsaved spouse who has departed remarries, I believe the Christian would be free to remarry since, by remarrying, the unsaved partner has closed the door on reconciliation.

**ESV Study Bible** - Most interpreters hold that God releases the believing spouse from the twin unending distresses of (a) a lifelong vain hope of reconciling with an unbeliever who has abandoned the believing spouse, and (b) a lifelong prohibition against enjoying the blessings of marriage again. Other interpreters, emphasizing 1 Cor. 7:39, hold that remarriage is never allowed after divorce.

**John MacArthur** - When an unbelieving spouse cannot tolerate the partner's faith and wants a divorce, it is best to let that happen in order to preserve **peace** in the family (cf. Ro 12:18). The bond of marriage is broken only by death (Ro 7:2), adultery (Mt 19:9), or an unbeliever's leaving. **not under bondage**. When the bond is broken in any of those ways, a Christian is free to marry another believer. Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is assumed. When divorce is permitted, so is remarriage. By implication, the permission for a widow to remarry (vv. 39, 40; Ro 7:3) because the "bond" is broken, extends to this case where there is no more "bondage." (Study Bible)

**NET NOTE on is not under bondage** (is not bound) -Interpreters differ over the implication of the statement the brother or sister is not bound. One view is that the believer is "not bound to continue the marriage," i.e., not so slavishly tied to the instruction about not divorcing (cf. vv. 10-11) that he or she refuses to face reality when the unbelieving spouse is unwilling to continue the relationship. In this view divorce is allowable under these circumstances, but not remarriage (v. 11 still applies: remain unmarried or be reconciled). The other view is that the believer is "not bound in regard to marriage," i.e., free to remain single or to remarry. The argument for this view is the conceptual parallel with vv. 39-40, where a wife is said to be "bound" (a different word in Greek, but the same concept) as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is "free" to marry as she wishes, only in the Lord. If the parallel holds, then not bound in v. 15 also means "free to marry another."

**Under bondage** (enslaved) (1402)(**douloo** see **doulos**) means to bring someone into a state of absolute obedience and thus to bring into bondage, to enslave, to make someone a slave. The idea is to be held and controlled against one's will. **Figuratively** (all NT uses except Acts 7:6) **douloo** means to gain control over someone. To become servant, to make someone a slave or to become a slave, to serve. The imagery derives directly from the ancient practice of enslaving an enemy defeated in battle as a prisoner! And so **douloo** describes not so much a relation of service as primarily one of dependence upon, or bondage to, something. **Vine** writes that **douloo** "signifies to fulfill the duties of a slave, for whom there was no choice either as to the kind or length of his service."

Douloo - only 8v in NT - Acts 7:6; Rom. 6:18; Rom. 6:22; 1 Co. 7:15; 1 Co. 9:19; Gal. 4:3; Tit. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:19

**But God has called (kaleo) us to peace (eirene)** - What does this mean? Well, divorce brings heated emotions, angry words and disturbance of **peace**. But when God **called** us (saved us), we instantly entered into a relationship of **peace** with God (Ro 5:1+) and now with the enabling power of the Spirit, we are to diligently pursue maintaining the peace of God (Php 4:6-7+, cf "shod

with....gospel of peace" - Eph 6:15+), and in this context applies especially to our marital relationships! While the situation may be difficult for a believing brother or sister in Christ, they are to take the approach of Hebrews 12:14+ and "**pursue (present imperative** see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) **peace** with all men" even in the midst of this "war-like" situation. Or as Paul says in Romans 12:18 "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at **peace** with all men." (cf Ro 12:18+) Ultimately that will necessitate that the believing spouse continually rely [on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) the divine call to pursue peace. (cf Gal 5:22+).

**Leon Morris** has a reasonable word on **peace - God has called us to live in peace** probably refers to the whole of the treatment of mixed marriages, not simply to the last clause. Paul's point is that the believer is called by God into a life where peace in the widest sense is his concern. In this matter of mixed marriages the line should be followed that conduces to peace. In some cases this will mean living with the pagan partner, in some cases it will mean accepting the pagan partner's decision that the marriage is at an end. The underlying concern for peace is the same in both cases.

**Warren Wiersbe** - But suppose the unsaved mate leaves the home? First Corinthians 7:15 gives the answer: the Christian partner is not obligated to keep the home together. We are called to peace, and we should do all we can to live in peace ("If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." - Ro. 12:18); but there comes a time in some situations where peace is impossible. If the unsaved mate separates from his or her partner, there is little the Christian can do except to pray and continue faithful to the Lord.

**Kistemaker** - The unbeliever is the one who breaks the marriage bond, which God had meant to be for life. Now the believer is no longer bound to that union, for his or her unbelieving spouse "has made a breach with God rather than with his or her partner." In this verse Paul neither forbids nor advocates remarriage for the forsaken spouse and leaves this matter an open question (compare vv. 9, 11). He is interested in the Christian's witness to the world, including the unbelieving husband or wife. **He urges the Christian to seek peace with the unbelieving spouse.** Paul wants the Christian marriage partner to live in obedience to Christ's gospel and thus to oppose valiantly the forces of the evil one (Eph. 6:15).

**Arnold** - While the believing partner has a legitimate basis for divorce if the unbeliever departs, everything possible should be done by the Christian to keep the marriage together. God has called the Christian to peace. Separation or divorce would disrupt the peace of the marriage union. The Christian should stay in the marriage and seek **peace**. A believer is not to stir up and tear up a marriage because there is a difference of religious belief. Furthermore, a Christian does not want to have guilt feelings upon the conscience for driving an unbelieving mate away. If the non-Christian should leave and divorce, the Christian should know in the heart that he or she did all that was possible to keep the marriage together.

**Peace** (1515) **eirene** from verb **eiro** = to join or bind together that which has been separated) literally pictures the binding or joining together again of that which had been separated or divided and thus setting at one again, a meaning conveyed by the common expression of one "having it all together". It follows that peace is the opposite of division or dissension. Peace as a state of concord and harmony is the opposite of war. Peace was used as a greeting or farewell corresponding to the Hebrew word shalom - "peace to you". **Eirene** can convey the sense of an inner rest, well being and harmony.

**Eirene** in the Corinthians letters - 1 Co. 1:3; 1 Co. 7:15; 1 Co. 14:33; 1 Co. 16:11; 2 Co. 1:2; 2 Co. 13:11.

#### Related Resource:

- [What should a Christian do if he or she is married to an unbeliever? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Corinthians 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?**

Amplified For, wife, how can you be sure of converting and saving your husband? Husband, how can you be sure of converting and saving your wife?

Wuest For how do you know positively, O wife, whether you will save your husband, or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will bring your husband to salvation? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will bring your wife to salvation?

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:16 Don't you wives realize that your husbands might be saved because of you? And don't you husbands realize that your wives might be saved because of you?

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:16 τ γ ρ ο δ α ς, γ ν α ι, ε τ ν ν ὄ ρ α σ σ ε ι ς; τ ο δ α ς, ν ε ρ, ε τ ν γ υ ν α κ α σ σ ε ι ς;

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:16 for what, hast thou known, O wife, whether the husband thou shalt save? or what, hast thou known, O husband, whether the wife thou shalt save?

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:16 For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:16 For you, wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Or you, husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:16 Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband; or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:16 as a wife, how can you tell whether you are to be the salvation of your husband; as a husband, how can you tell whether you are to be the salvation of your wife?

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:16 How do you as a wife know whether you will save your husband? How do you as a husband know whether you will save your wife?

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:16 For how may you be certain, O wife, that you will not be the cause of salvation to your husband? or you, O husband, that you may not do the same for your wife?

- **O wife:** 1Co 9:22 Pr 11:30 Lu 15:10 1Ti 4:16 Jas 5:19,20 1Pe 3:1,2
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SALVATION OF SPOUSES UNCERTAIN

For ([gar](#)) term of explanation.

**How do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband?**- NLT - You wives must remember that your husbands might be converted because of you.

**Save** ([4982](#)) **sozo**, has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole. Sozo in the Corinthians letters - 1 Co. 1:18; 1 Co. 1:21; 1 Co. 3:15; 1 Co. 5:5; 1 Co. 7:16; 1 Co. 9:22; 1 Co. 10:33; 1 Co. 15:2; 2 Co. 2:15;

**Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?**- NLT - And you husbands must remember that your wives might be converted because of you.

**MacArthur** - A wife has no assurance that she will save her husband, and a husband has no assurance that he will save his wife. Regardless of a Christian's motives and hopes, **the likelihood of leading the partner to Christ is minimal.** If the partner stays in the marriage unwillingly or reluctantly, the likelihood is even less, and the disruption of family peace is assured. The Lord therefore allows no option. Evangelism is not cause enough to maintain a marriage, especially if the unbelieving partner wants to leave. The believer should let God follow that spouse's soul with the message of salvation, and use whomever He will to take up the call to faith.

**Arnold** - There is always the possibility the unsaved partner will be saved, and this is why the believing partner should "hang in there" as long as possible. The believing partner does not actually save the unbelieving partner but becomes the instrument God uses to save the unbelieving partner. The most likely instrument God will use in the salvation of the unbelieving partner is the

believing partner. Sometimes the witness will only be by life and not words, but a saved mate should so live before an unsaved partner that the unsaved one can see Christ has made him or her a better mate. I knew a woman who was saved long before her husband. She was very aggressive in her desire to see her husband saved. She would constantly harp at him to come to Christ. She would leave notes on his pillow and write in lipstick on the mirror, "Jesus saves." She drove a wedge between her and her husband so he became even more rebellious. Finally some people took her aside and explained to her she was to win her husband without saying a word according to 1 Peter 3:1. She tried it and it worked. He became a true Christian. The last time I saw this couple the man was an elder in his church. How many times I have heard unsaved husbands say, "I'm not saved but Christianity has made my wife a better person, a better mate, a better lover and a better mother." Unsaved partners may argue with the truth of the gospel but they cannot argue with a changed life. Many Christians give up too easily on their unsaved mates. ([Advice About Marriage](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about household salvation? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Corinthians 7:17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.**

**Amplified** Only, let each one [seek to conduct himself and regulate his affairs so as to] lead the life which the Lord has allotted and imparted to him and to which God has invited and summoned him. This is my order in all the churches.

**Wuest** Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one his lot [in life], as God has called each one, in that way let him be ordering his manner of life. And so in all the assemblies I am giving orders. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**NET** 1 Corinthians 7:17 Nevertheless, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each person, so must he live. I give this sort of direction in all the churches.

**NLT** 1 Corinthians 7:17 Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you. This is my rule for all the churches.

**ESV** 1 Corinthians 7:17 Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

**NIV** 1 Corinthians 7:17 Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

**GNT** 1 Corinthians 7:17 Ε μ κ σ τ ς μ ρισεν κ ριος, κ αστον ς κ κληκεν θε ς, ο τως περιπατε τω. κα ο τως ν τα ς κ κλησ αις π σαις διατ σοσμαι.

**KJV** 1 Corinthians 7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

**YLT** 1 Corinthians 7:17 if not, as God did distribute to each, as the Lord hath called each -- so let him walk; and thus in all the assemblies do I direct:

**ASV** 1 Corinthians 7:17 Only, as the Lord hath distributed to each man, as God hath called each, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches.

**CSB** 1 Corinthians 7:17 However, each one must live his life in the situation the Lord assigned when God called him. This is what I command in all the churches.

**NKJ** 1 Corinthians 7:17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

**NRS** 1 Corinthians 7:17 However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches.

**NAB** 1 Corinthians 7:17 Only, everyone should live as the Lord has assigned, just as God called each one. I give this order in all the churches.

**NJB** 1 Corinthians 7:17 Anyway let everyone continue in the part which the Lord has allotted to him, as he



was when God called him. This is the rule that I give to all the churches.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:17 Everyone should live the life that the Lord gave him when God called him. This is the guideline I use in every church.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:17 Only, as the Lord has given to a man, and as is the purpose of God for him, so let him go on living. And these are my orders for all the churches.

- **as the Lord:** 1Co 7:7 Mt 19:12 Ro 12:3-8 1Pe 4:10,11
- **as God has** 1Co 7:18,20,21,24
- **so I direct** 1Co 4:17 16:1 2Co 11:28
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WHAT TO DO NOW THAT THEY WERE CALLED?

In this next section 1 Cor 7:17-24 Paul shifts from addressing issues related to marriage to discussing social issues of those who had been **CALLED** (synonymous with those who had become believers. **Called** is used 8x in these 8 verses, so clearly a key word!). The **CALLED** were asking him what should they do now that they were believers in regard to circumcision/uncircumcision and slavery. Recall that some estimate up to 50% of the Roman population was composed of slaves. Now that they were believers in Christ, what should they do. So Paul begins by giving them a general command.

**Barton** - BELIEVERS SHOULD BE CONTENT WHERE THEY ARE - 1 Cor 7:17–24 Paul had just finished explaining to the believers who were married to unbelievers that they should stay in their situation peacefully if at all possible and live for Christ in their marriage. This passage expands his thought on that topic, explaining that just because people become Christians, this does not call for wholesale changes in every part of their outward lives. Christ makes changes from within and calls people from all walks of life. While some changes are made in behavior and attitudes, the believers ought not make some kinds of changes. For example, they ought not change marriage partners. They need not even try to change jobs (unless the job was dishonoring to God). Instead, accept whatever situation the Lord has put you in, and continue on as you were when God first called you because God can use his faithful followers in all areas of life. This was not Paul's advice just to the church in Corinth but his rule for all the churches. (Life Application Commentary)

**MacArthur** -For the second time Paul states the principle of being content to stay in the condition we were in when saved, whether it is racial or social. The focus of a Christian's concern should be on divinely supernatural things. Another illustration is given, this time concerning slaves.

**Guzik** - No matter what your station—married, single, divorced, widowed, remarried, whatever—God can work in your life. Instead of thinking that you can or will walk for the Lord when your station changes, walk for the Lord in the place you are right now.. This also is a warning about trying to undo the past in regard to relationships. God tells us to repent of whatever sin is there and then to move on. If you are married to your second wife, after wrongfully divorcing your first wife, and become a Christian, don't think you must now leave your second wife and go back to your first wife, trying to undo the past. As the Lord has **called** you, walk in that place right now. So **let him walk** is also a warning to beware the danger of thinking other people have it better than you do because of their different station in life. It doesn't matter nearly as much whether you are married, single, divorced, or remarried; what matters more is an on-fire **walk** with Jesus right now.

**Arnold** - God called each Christian to salvation, and has called the believer to stay in the place God called. Paul is not saying if a person has been a prostitute, gambler or bank robber, he or she should stay in that state or environment after conversion to Christ. He is talking about social relationships and marriage in particular. For those who were called into a spiritually mixed marriage, they ought to stay in that relationship.

**Only, as the Lord has assigned** ([merizo](#) - allotted, apportioned) **to each one** ([hekastos](#)), **as God has called each** ([hekastos](#)), **in this manner let him walk** - NLT = "Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you." **Let him walk** is a [present imperative](#) commanding this to be the believer's lifestyle (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)).

**Kistemaker** writes on **Let him walk** "When the Christian spouse is divorced by the unbelieving partner, then let it be so, says Paul. Nevertheless, when a marriage has been dissolved, life continues."

**Guzik** on **let him walk** - No matter what your station—married, single, divorced, widowed, remarried, whatever—God can work in your life. Instead of thinking that you can or will walk for the Lord when your station changes, **walk** for the Lord in the place you are right now.. This also is a warning about trying to undo the past in regard to relationships. God tells us to repent of whatever sin is there and then to move on. If you are married to your second wife, after wrongfully divorcing your first wife, and become a Christian,



don't think you must now leave your second wife and go back to your first wife, trying to undo the past. As the Lord has called you, **walk** in that place right now. So **let him walk** is also a warning to beware the danger of thinking other people have it better than you do because of their different station in life. It doesn't matter nearly as much whether you are married, single, divorced, or remarried; what matters more is an on-fire walk with Jesus right now.

The principle: you can live for God where you are right now.

-- David Guzik

**Robertson** - Each has his lot from the Lord Jesus, has his call from God. He is not to seek a rupture of the marriage relation if the unbeliever does not ask for it

**Charles Swindoll** - Before closing the chapter, a warning must be sounded. Being human and sinful and weak, we are all equipped with a remarkable ability to rationalize. Unless we consciously guard against it, when we experience marital difficulties, we'll begin to search for a way out instead of a way through. Given sufficient time in the crucible, divorce will seem our only option, our long-awaited and much-deserved utopia. And we will begin to push in that direction, at times ignoring the inner voice of God's Spirit and at other times violating the written principles of God's Word. Either is a grievous act (Charles Swindoll, Divorce).

**Called** (invited, summoned) (2564) (**kaleo** from root **kal-**, whence English "call" and "clamour") literally means to speak to another in order to attract their attention or to them bring nearer, either physically or in a personal relationship. **To call in the sense of to choose** so that one might receive some special benefit or experience. This refers to God's call of sinners ("Divine call" of God to participation in salvation). Of the Divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption. **Kaleo** in this usage is figurative for it is not a literal call (like "Come over here and be saved").

**Call to Salvation** - Mt 9:13+, Mk 2:17+, Lk 5:32+ Jn 10:3KJV (not in NAS), Ro 1:6, 7±; Ro 8:28±, Ro 8:30±; Ro 9:24±; 1Co 1:9, 24+; 1Co 7:15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24+, Gal 1:6, 15+; Gal 5:8, 13+, Ep 4:1±, Ep 4:4±; Col 3:15±, 1Th 2:12±, 1Th 4:7±, 1Th 5:24±, 2Th 2:14+ 1Ti 6:12, 2Ti 1:9±; He 9:15±, 1Pe 1:15±; 1Pe 2:9±, 1Pe 2:21±; 1Pe 3:9±, 1Pe 5:10± 2Pe 1:3±; Jude 1:1+

**Related Resource:**

- [What is the effectual calling/call? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Let him walk** (Behave, Conduct, Tread) (4043) **peripateo** from **peri** = about, around + **pateo** = walk, tread) means literally to walk around (walk around in a complete circuit or full circle), to go here and there walking, to tread all around. The 39 uses in the Gospels always refer to literal, physical walking. ([See Spurgeon's comments on what it means to walk](#)) Paul uses **peripateo** only in the metaphorical sense (32 times in his Epistles) meaning to conduct one's life, to order one's behavior, to behave, to make one's way, to make due use of opportunities, to live or pass one's life (with a connotation of spending some time in a place), to walk with God in the complete circuit (course) of faith. Stated another way, to "walk around a circuit" begins with faith and ends with faith works (cf James 2:14-26+), initiated and enabled by the Spirit. The believer "walks out" with the Lord, what He first works in, doing so by obedience of faith leading to good (God) works (see Eph 2:10+). Given this picture of one coming full circle, one might say that faith without works is walking "half circle" which ends up going no where!

**Peripateo** uses in the Corinthians letters -1 Co. 3:3; 1 Co. 7:17; 2 Co. 4:2; 2 Co. 5:7; 2 Co. 10:2; 2 Co. 10:3; 2 Co. 12:18

**And so I** (present tense - continually) **direct in all the churches** (**ekklesia**) - NET - "I give this sort of direction in all the churches." This is truth that applies to all churches of all ages. Direct is a "Military term....to arrange in all the churches" (Robertson)

This principle that each believer to stay on course, to continue on just as they had been doing when God called (saved) them was not just applicable to the church at Corinth but was Paul's directive to all the churches he had planted. The mantra of these churches needed to be something like "Keep on keeping on" whether this referred to their marital status or their social situation (which he discusses in the following passages on circumcision and slavery).

**Vine** - The apostle was making clear to the saints in Corinth that these instructions were not by way of exceptional treatment in their case, they were a general obligation for all churches

The key verses of today's reading are verses 17 and 24. They explain in part how it is that we must understand and live out our identity in Christ. One godly saint echoed Paul when he said, "Our sanctification does not depend as much on changing our activities as it does on doing them for God rather than for ourselves." (Today in the Word)

**Direct** (arrange, give orders or instructions) (1299)(**diatasso** from **dia** = through + **tasso** = order) means literally to arrange thoroughly, to arrange in its proper order, to issue orderly and detailed instructions as to what must be done. To institute, prescribe, to appoint, to set in order (Titus 1:5+), ordain (1 Cor 7:17 regarding marital conditions); to give directions (Acts 7:44-God directed Moses to make the Tabernacle according to pattern), to command (with the implication of setting in order) as did Emperor Claudius' "commanding" that Jews must leave Rome (Acts 18:2+, cp Lk 3:13+). **Diatasso** was a technical word for carrying out laws and sometimes used by military and government officials (cf Acts 18:2+, Lk 3:13+). It was a word that denoted a command given from an authority. Moulton and Milligan add that diatasso was a technical term used in connection with wills, as well as a general word for commanding.

**Diatasso** in the NT - Matt. 11:1; Lk. 3:13; Lk. 8:55; Lk. 17:9; Lk. 17:10; Acts 7:44; Acts 18:2; Acts 20:13; Acts 23:31; Acts 24:23; 1 Co. 7:17; 1 Co. 9:14; 1 Co. 11:34; 1 Co. 16:1; Gal. 3:19; Tit. 1:5

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## Dave Roper - Being Single-minded

Warm-up: 1 Corinthians 7:1–40

Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. 1 Corinthians 7:17

The poet Robert Service once observed that "there's a race of men that don't fit in." In the world today that race would have to be represented by God's single servants.

Unmarried men are especially suspect: We're told, by people who are supposed to know these things, that they're three times more prone to nervous breakdown than married men and more disposed to crime, drugs, alcoholism, and violence. They're more irresponsible about their debts, more accident prone, more susceptible to disease. Their mortality rate is almost double that of married men and three times the rate of single women, and suicide is increasingly the way they die.

Furthermore, we're told that single men are full of sexual urgency and ego-sensitivity, and known for vain posturing and tall stories. They try too hard, which is why they are not only single but alone. Art Hoppe, columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, recently quoted an older, single man who walked out of a bar by himself, put on his hat, and said quietly to himself, "My place or mine?"

All of this may lead us to believe that there's something dreadfully wrong with being unmarried. If not sinful, being spouseless is at least considered strange, and especially strange are those hardy souls who remain unmarried after they're over the hill. "So why aren't you married yet?" is the opening gambit of all matchmaking mothers, as though you're fundamentally weird if you're not married.

Yet, isn't it odd that we denigrate the single state, when our Lord, the only sinless, perfect man who ever lived, wasn't married? That's very odd indeed.

It's enough that Jesus was a bachelor, but we have more. We have His explicit teaching on single living. When His disciples complained that His teaching on staying married was too hot to handle and concluded that it might be better not to marry, Jesus actually agreed with them. He continued, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some . . . have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it" (Matthew 19:11–12). As far as Jesus was concerned, being single is not only good, it's a gift from God.

Paul also agreed. When certain Corinthians wrote asking whether or not it's "good for a man not to marry" (1 Corinthians 7:1), Paul replied that for some, it was better to be single—it was better for him—and, in concert with Jesus, he declared that celibacy was a gift from God: "I wish that all men were as I am [single]. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that" (7:7).

So I ask you now, would Jesus and His apostles teach us that singleness is a gift of God if it's a serious impediment to one's pursuit of satisfaction in Him? Of course not! If you're called to be single, you're not strange; you're someone very special.

Paul, in this same context, elaborates on the greater advantages of being single. Since we're all here a short time, he concludes, being single means that we can make the most of our time: "What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. . . . This world in its present form is passing away. I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord" (7:29–32).

It does seem downright un-American for single people, who have so much discretionary time and money, not to go for the loudest stereo and the quickest car they can buy. But such an outlook for God's men and women seems tawdry and cheap compared to a life lived out for His good. The greater advantage of the solitary life is that one has unfettered opportunity to invest a life in eternal things.

Could Paul have won the West if he had taken “a believing wife along . . . , as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas” (1 Corinthians 9:5)? Paul himself insists that if one marries, he or she must be devoted to marriage, but, as Paul points out, the unmarried person is concerned solely about the Lord’s affairs (7:34).

One problem with being single is that you’re always in transit, always waiting for the wedding so you can get on with your life. One of my unmarried friends described the feeling this way: “The suggestion creeps into my mind that I’m incomplete; I’m in a holding pattern, flying around trying to find an airport so I can get my feet on the ground and start living. It comes up even in the way I live, the way I place things in my room. I keep thinking, ‘When I have my own place . . . ,’ or ‘When I have someone with me, then I’ll do this or that. . . .’ This kind of thinking keeps me from being the man God has called me to be right now” (John Fischer).

Singleness can be viewed as an olive jammed in the neck of a bottle—the one impediment that frustrates the use of one’s giftedness. Thus when a person gets singleness out of the system, the rest of the person will come out. But it must not be so; we must bloom where we’re planted. Our call to Christ sanctifies every state, even the single state. God’s grace is sufficient for now!

Paul observes that it’s not being married that ends a person’s woes: “Those who marry will face many troubles in this life”—neither the married nor the single state will do ultimately (7:28). Francis Bacon wrote,

Domestic cares afflict the husband’s bed,  
Or pain his head.  
Those that live single take it for a curse,  
Some would have children;  
Those that have them moan or wish them gone.  
What is it then to have or have no wife,  
But single thralldom or double strife.  
In the end, only God will do.

Being single doesn’t mean that your urge to merge will diminish, nor does it mean that you won’t be lonely and sometimes sad; being single with God simply means that you won’t be alone. As Paul himself learned, you can “remain” (live by yourself) with God (7:24).

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### **1 Corinthians 7:17–24 ART THOU CALLED BEING A SERVANT?**

This part of First Corinthians is taken up with the call of God and how it might affect the social circumstances of those who are called. Paul teaches that in this situation the salvation of one partner in a marriage, for example, does not break the marriage bond. Indeed, if anything it should strengthen it! Nor does the question suggest that the new Christian should be ashamed of, or seek to hide the circumstances he was in when called. In verse 21 there is the particular question as to whether someone saved while working as a slave should now seek to leave that position of servitude. After all, it might be argued that it is not acceptable to be in material and physical bondage while one enjoys a new spiritual freedom in Christ. In New Testament times many slaves were converted and no doubt at least some of them felt that should, as of right, ensure their freedom from the bondage of physical slavery.

Verses 23 and 24 teach that such, originally the servants of men, had now become the servants of a higher Master, the Lord Himself. An understanding of that fact should reassure the convert that he was not really bound to man but to God and had become a participant in a higher service. The tasks that previously were performed solely for the earthly master are now seen to be performed primarily for the Lord. This would encourage the slave to work diligently so that he need not spend his days dreaming about freedom. On the other hand, however, should a slave for some reason be offered freedom then it would be right for him to accept that situation as of the Lord who may have a different plan to be put into operation.

Slaves called by the gospel were spiritually the Lord’s freemen and others called while free in society became the Lord’s bondslaves. In effect, therefore, there was no difference between the bond and the free and no reason for either to insist on changing his circumstances. If the Lord wished to change the circumstances then He would do so. Today, believers are often able to choose and to change their employment at will and are thus given the opportunity of judging whether their employment is compatible with, or antagonistic to, their Christian profession. (Day by Day: Bible Questions)

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### **Martin Luther - STAY WHERE YOU ARE**

Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him.

This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. 1 Corinthians 7:17

Christians have freedom. Faith and the Christian life aren't restricted to any particular station or position in life. But they are above, in, and throughout all positions in life. Therefore, it's not necessary for you to accept or give up any position in life to receive salvation. Stay in whatever place the gospel finds you. You can remain there and be saved. It's not necessary for you to give up your marriage and run from your non-Christian spouse for the sake of faith or salvation. On the other hand, it's not necessary for you to become married for the sake of faith or salvation. If you are married, whether it be to a Christian or non-Christian, whether to a good or evil person, you are neither saved nor condemned because of that. If you are unmarried, you also are not saved or condemned because of being single. It is all free—free!

As a result, if you are a Christian and remain one, you will be saved, and if you remain a non-Christian, you will be condemned. "This is the rule I lay down in all the churches" means "This is the rule I teach all Christians to whom I preach. For I do not teach them to leave their positions in life and stir up unrest, but to remain where they are and live in peace." So you see that Paul doesn't call any position in life a blessed one except this one: being a Christian. The others he frees up so that in and of themselves they neither save nor condemn us. But all positions in life—no matter how well kept—can be blessed through faith or cursed through lack of faith.

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### **John Bennett - 1 Corinthians 7:17–22 LET EVERY MAN ABIDE IN THE SAME CALLING**

The principle that has already been taught regarding marriage in verses 12–16 is now applied to the wider sphere of a person's circumstances when saved. That is to say, whatever the place or rank, whether Jew or Gentile, there should be contentment, for Christianity is more than sufficient for every person no matter what their status in life. 'Godliness with contentment is great gain', 1 Tim. 6:6.

The chief thing is to sincerely seek to obey the commandments of God, v. 19, and so the external observance of circumcision or any other external ceremony is of itself of no account.

Whether one is a servant or a freeman, this will not be inconsistent with Christian duty and fulfillment; indeed it can be positively used for the Lord, the point being that believers can be useful in whatever sphere God has saved them.

It may be thought that a free and wealthy man would have greater opportunities, but this is not really so as a servant can reach his fellow servants for God. The overriding principle is that all believers are Christ's servants, v. 22. As Lord of the life, the One who paid a great price to redeem us back from the slave market of sin, He is owed duty and service above all others.

However, if, at the time of our salvation, our occupation involves immorality or is otherwise undesirable in the light of the scriptures, we should immediately cease it upon becoming a believer. Many have been convicted of the need to stop a doubtful vocation and God has honoured them and opened up a way for them to obtain more suitable employment.

Whatever our position or status in this world, let us take up some of the words of GEORGE MATHESON'S hymn:-

'Make me a captive, Lord,  
And then I shall be free.  
My power is faint and low  
Till I have learned to serve.  
My will is not my own  
Till thou hast made it thine;  
If it would reach a monarch's throne,  
I must its crown resign'.

(Day by Day Bible Commands)

**1 Corinthians 7:18 Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.**

Amplified Was anyone at the time of his summons [from God] already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the evidence of circumcision. Was anyone at the time [God] called him uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.

Wuest Was any certain person divinely summoned [into salvation] when he was in a state of circumcision? Let him not have the marks of circumcision effaced. Has any certain person been divinely summoned [into salvation] when he was uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:18 Was anyone called after he had been circumcised? He should not try to undo his circumcision. Was anyone called who is uncircumcised? He should not get circumcised.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:18 For instance, a man who was circumcised before he became a believer should not try to reverse it. And the man who was uncircumcised when he became a believer should not be circumcised now.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:18 περιπετμημ νος τις κλθη, μ πισπ σθω· ν κροβυστ κ κλητα τις, μ περιπεμν σθω.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:18 being circumcised -- was any one called? let him not become uncircumcised; in uncircumcision was any one called? let him not be circumcised;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:18 Was any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Hath any been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:18 Was anyone already circumcised when he was called? He should not undo his circumcision. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? He should not get circumcised.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:18 Was someone called after he had been circumcised? He should not try to undo his circumcision. Was an uncircumcised person called? He should not be circumcised.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:18 If a man who is called has already been circumcised, then he must stay circumcised; when an uncircumcised man is called, he may not be circumcised.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:18 Any man who was already circumcised when he was called to be a Christian shouldn't undo his circumcision. Any man who was uncircumcised when he was called to be a Christian shouldn't get circumcised.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:18 If any man who is a Christian has had circumcision, let him keep so; and if any man who is a Christian has not had circumcision, let him make no change.

- being: Ac 15:1,5,19,24,28 Ga 5:1-3 Col 3:11
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE ILLUSTRATION OF CIRCUMCISION

As **Guzik** noted in 1 Cor 7:17 Paul's principle that you can live for God where you are right now. Now in 1 Cor 7:18 Paul gives an example of this principle from the practice of circumcision. **Was anyone called while circumcised?** -- "Paul is saying that if you were circumcised when you became a Christian, fine. If you were not circumcised when you became a Christian, fine also. Those things do not matter. What matters is serving the Lord where we are at right now."

**Was any man called ([kaleo](#)) when he was already circumcised? He is **not to become uncircumcised**.** - NLT = "For instance, a man who was circumcised before he became a believer should not try to reverse it." Called refers to the [effectual call to salvation](#). So was the man **called** to salvation when he was circumcised (as Jews would have been)? If so, Paul gives a command in the [present imperative with a negative](#) which implies that some of the his readers were already seeking to "become uncircumcised" undergoing a surgical procedure to reverse the appearance of circumcision!

**Barton** - BELIEVERS SHOULD BE CONTENT WHERE THEY ARE - 1 Cor 7:17–24 For instance, Paul wrote, a man who was circumcised before he became a believer should not try to reverse it. For the Jews, circumcision was the sign of their covenant with

God; the Greeks, however, looked down upon it as the mark of lowly people. Some Jews, in an attempt to become more acceptable in Greek culture, could attempt to surgically reverse the marks of a circumcision. To add to the confusion, the Judaizers (a group of false teachers) were claiming that Gentiles had to be circumcised before they could become Christians. Jewish Christians did not need to reverse their circumcisions, and Gentile Christians did not need to be circumcised (Romans 2:25, 29; Galatians 5:6). Instead, they should stay exactly as they were when they became believers; any outward change would make no difference. The inner change is all that matters. They should focus on keeping the commandments of God, desiring to conform their heart and will in obedience to him. (Life Application Commentary)

**Arnold** - God's basic principle is that a person should stay in that social condition or relationship in which he was called without complaint. If there is a possibility to move out, such as in the case of slavery (and there is a biblical basis to do so), this has the approval of God. However, Paul has taken these illustrations and applied them to Christian marriage. The basic principle is that Christians married to unsaved mates are to stay in that marriage without divorce and without complaint, for this is God's ideal. As the country boy said, "Stick with the one who brung ya to the dance!" However, there may be biblical grounds for divorce and only the Biblical criterion is to be used. There is a word of comfort here for those Christians who are living with non-Christian mates. They are to remain with God. The God of all comfort will keep His hand of their lives. He will come to their aid and rescue them when necessary. He will meet their needs abundantly and graciously. Their key is to remain with God through faith.

**Become...uncircumcised** (1986) (**epispao** from **epi** = upon + **pao** = to draw) means literally to draw over and was a medical technical term pull over the foreskin to conceal former circumcision, to remove the marks of circumcision. Used on in 1 Cor 7:18.

**NET NOTE on not to become uncircumcised** - Grk "Let him not pull over the foreskin," that is, attempt to reverse the appearance of circumcision by a surgical procedure. This was sometimes done by Hellenistic Jews to hide the embarrassment of circumcision (1 Macc 1:15; Josephus, Ant. 12.5.1 [12.241]).

**Guzik** - How could one become uncircumcised? "Some Jews, for fear of Antiochus, made themselves uncircumcised, 1 Maccab. 1:16. Others for shame after they were gained to the knowledge of Christ, as here. This was done by drawing up the fore-skin with a surgeon's instrument." (Trapp) "By frequent stretching, the circumcised skin could be again so drawn over, as to prevent the ancient sign of circumcision from appearing." (Clarke)

**MacArthur on not to become uncircumcised** - This had a very specific application. Circumcision was an embarrassment in the Roman world. According to the Maccabees, some Jewish men "made themselves uncircumcised." Josephus tells us that during the Greek rule of the eastern Mediterranean several centuries before Christ, some Jewish men who wanted to be accepted into Greek society had surgery performed to make themselves appear uncircumcised when they bathed or exercised at the gymnasiums. They literally became uncircumcised surgically. The Roman encyclopedist Celsus, in the first century A.D., [wrote a detailed description of the surgical procedure for decircumcision](#) (De Medicina VII. 25). The practice was so common that considerable rabbinic literature addressed the problem (e.g., Aboth 3:11; Jerushalmi Peah 1 and 16b; Lamentations Rabbah 1:20). Jews who had such surgery were referred to as epispatics, a name taken from the euphemistic term epispao, meaning "to draw over," or "to pull towards." That is the very term Paul uses here for uncircumcised. Perhaps some Jewish Christians thought that was a way to demonstrate their break with Judaism.

**Has anyone been called (kaleo) in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.** - "And the man who was uncircumcised when he became a believer should not be circumcised now." Paul continues to emphasize his point in 1 Cor 7:17 that they should each continue to live in whatever situation the providence of God had placed them when He saved them. Don't try to change. Here he is speaking of circumcision, but this principle was to apply to their marriages. Don't try to change.

**Robertson** - The point is that a Jew is to remain a Jew, a Gentile to be a Gentile. Both stand on an equality in the Christian churches. This freedom about circumcision illustrates the freedom about Gentile mixed marriages.

As you have undoubtedly noticed **called (kaleo)** is a key word in chapter 7 where it is used 9x in 7 verses (1 Cor 7:15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24)

**1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.**

Amplified For circumcision is nothing and counts for nothing, neither does uncircumcision, but [what counts is] keeping the commandments of God.

Wuest This thing called circumcision is not anything, and this thing called uncircumcision is not anything, but



keeping the commandments of God [is what counts]. ([Erdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Instead, keeping God's commandments is what counts.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:19 For it makes no difference whether or not a man has been circumcised. The important thing is to keep God's commandments.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:19 For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:19 περιτομὸς οὐδὲν σπιν καὶ κροβυστὰ οὐδὲν σπιν, ἀλλὰ τήρησις νόμων θεοῦ.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:19 the circumcision is nothing, and the uncircumcision is nothing -- but a keeping of the commands of God.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision does not matter and uncircumcision does not matter, but keeping God's commands does.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision means nothing, and uncircumcision means nothing; what matters is keeping God's commandments.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:19 To be circumcised is of no importance, and to be uncircumcised is of no importance; what is important is the keeping of God's commandments.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and the lack of it is nothing. But keeping what God commands is everything.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and its opposite is nothing, but only doing the orders of God is of value.

- **Circumcision:** 1Co 8:8 Ro 2:25-29 3:30 Ga 5:6 Gal 6:15
- **but:** 1Sa 15:22 Jer 7:22,23 Mt 5:19 Joh 15:14 1Jn 2:3-4 1Jn 3:22-24 1Jn 5:2-3 Rev 22:14
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Romans 2:25-29+ For indeed **circumcision** is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your **circumcision** has become **uncircumcision**. 26 So if the **uncircumcised** man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his **uncircumcision** be regarded as **circumcision**? 27 And he who is physically **uncircumcised**, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is **circumcision** that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision** is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Galatians 5:6+ For in Christ Jesus neither **circumcision** nor **uncircumcision** means anything, but faith working through love.

Galatians 6:15+ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

1 John 2:3-4+ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we (present tense - not perfectly but habitually) **keep** ([tereo](#)) **His commandments**. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not (present tense - habitually) **keep** ([tereo](#)) His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

1 John 5:2-3+ By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and present tense - not perfectly but habitually) **observe** ([tereo](#)) His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we present tense - habitually) **keep** ([tereo](#)) His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

## **TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE**

**Guzik** makes an excellent point - Paul's point isn't really about circumcision; that is just an example. Even as being circumcised or uncircumcised is irrelevant when it comes to serving God, so is your current marital state. **He could just as easily say, and is saying by analogy, Married is nothing and unmarried is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**

**Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing** - The physical state is of no importance regarding one's spiritual state. The believers in Corinth whether Jew or Gentile, needed to realize that the external was not what was important. God was interested in their heart.

Paul wrote a similar truth to the Galatians

Galatians 5:6+ For in Christ Jesus neither **circumcision** nor **uncircumcision** means anything, but faith working through love.

Galatians 6:15+ For neither is **circumcision** anything, nor **uncircumcision**, but a new creation.

**But** - Term of contrast. In this case the contrast is between the external, physical and the internal, spiritual and it was the latter that really mattered to God.

**What matters is the keeping of the commandments of God** - This is the "mark" of spirituality, not whether they were or were not circumcised. And of course he is not telling them to keep the Mosaic Law, for they are now under grace, not law (Ro 6:14+).

As Jesus told His disciples

"If you love Me, you **will keep My commandments.**" (Jn 14:15)

"He who has **My commandments and keeps them**, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." (Jn 14:21)

"If anyone loves Me, **he will keep My word**; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him." (Jn 14:23)

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." (Jn 15:10)

"You are My friends **if you do what I command you.**" (John 15:14)

As James said "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an **effectual doer**, this man will be blessed in what he does." (James 1:25+, contrast James 1:22+)

God is more interested in the internal, than the external!

As Samuel told Saul "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? **Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.**" (1 Sa 15:22-23)

**Keeping** is ([5084](#)) **teresis** (from [tereo](#) - see uses in [related passages above](#)) which speaks first of the action of watching as someone in jail (Acts 4:3, 5:18), but here is used figuratively of persistently "watching," observing or obeying God's commandments, not legalistically of course but under grace and empowered by the Spirit Who enables one to generally (not perfectly) keep God's commandments which are always "holy and righteous and good." (Ro 7:12+).

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Psalm 51:16-17 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

**Bob Utley** - This is the OT prophets' emphasis that obedience is more significant than the ritual (cf. 1 Sa 15:22; Isa 1:11-17+;

Hos 6:6+; Amos 5:21–27; Mic 6:6–8+). God looks at our attitude and motive before He looks at our acts.

**Barton** - Apparently the Corinthians were ready to make wholesale changes without thinking through the ramifications. Paul was writing to say that people should be Christians where they are. You can do God's work and demonstrate your faith anywhere. If you became a Christian after marriage, and your spouse is not a believer, remember that you don't have to be married to a Christian to live for Christ. Don't assume that you are in the wrong place or are stuck with the wrong person. You may be just where God wants you. (Ibid)

**Robertson** - Paul's view of the worthlessness of circumcision or of uncircumcision is stated again in Gal. 5:6; 6:15; Ro. 2:25–29 (only the inward or spiritual Jew counts). (See [passages above](#))

**Circumcision** (4061) **peritome** from **perí** = around + **témno** = cut off) refers literally to cutting and removal of the foreskin. As discussed below both the Old and New Testament also use the concept of circumcision in a figurative or metaphorical sense. (See also exposition of [Scriptures on Circumcision](#)) Although **circumcision** was required by the Mosaic law, the rite was neglected during the days when the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness. Perhaps this was a sign that the nation had broken their covenant with God through their disobedience. The rite was resumed when they entered the land of Canaan, with Joshua performing the ritual on the generation born in the wilderness (Joshua 5). The Hebrew people came to take great pride in circumcision; in fact, it became a badge of their spiritual and national superiority. This practice fostered an exclusivist mentality instead of a missionary zeal to reach the Gentiles which was God's original intent for His "chosen" people. A daily prayer of a strict Jewish male was to thank God that he was neither a woman, a Samaritan, nor a Gentile. Gentiles came to be regarded by the Jews as the "**uncircumcision**," a term of disrespect implying that non-Jewish peoples were outside the circle of God's love. As discussed below, God applied the very same term ("uncircumcised") to describe His "chosen" people. The terms "**circumcised**" and "**uncircumcised**" became emotionally charged symbols to Israel and their Gentile neighbors. This issue later brought discord into the fellowship of the New Testament church and especially caused confusion about how one obtained genuine salvation.

**Uncircumcision** (203) **akrobustia** from **ákron** = the extreme + **búo** = cover) means uncircumcised (the foreskin not cut off) or uncircumcision and thus referred to the **prepuce** or **foreskin**.

## 1 Corinthians 7:20 Each man must **remain** in that condition in which he was called.

Amplified Everyone should remain after God calls him in the station or condition of life in which the summons found him.

Wuest Each one, in the circumstance in which he was divinely summoned [into salvation], in this let him be remaining. ([Eermans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:20 Let each one remain in that situation in life in which he was called.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:20 Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:20 καστος ν τ κλ σει κλ θη, ν τα τ μεν τω.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:20 Each in the calling in which he was called -- in this let him remain;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:20 Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:20 Each person should remain in the life situation in which he was called.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:20 Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:20 Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:20 Everyone should stay in whatever state he was in when he was called.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:20 All people should stay as they were when they were called.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:20 Let every man keep the position in which he has been placed by God.

- **remain:** 1Co 7:17,21-23 Pr 27:8 Lu 3:10-14 1Th 4:11 2Th 3:12
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **REMAIN IN YOUR PRE-CONVERSION CONDITION**

Just in case they missed it, Paul essentially repeats what he said in 1 Cor 7:17 - continue on as you were when God called (saved) you and in context he is including their variegated marital situations, circumcised or not and slave or not (in the following section 1 Cor 7:21-23).

**Barton** points out that in saying continue where you were when God called you "it does not refer to one's spiritual, inward life; that should be growing and changing every day as believers draw closer to and learn more about God (cf 2 Pe 3:18+)."

**Each man** ([hekastos](#)) **must remain** ([meno](#) command in [present imperative](#)) **in that condition in which he was called** ([kaleo](#)) - Literally "in the calling in which he was called." The **condition** he refers to in context is his or her marital status, not his or her moral/ethical status which is radically changed because of being a new creature in Christ (2 Cor 5:17+). The phrase in which he was called is simply another way of saying "when he/she was saved by grace through faith" (Eph 2:8-9+).

Paul's charge to **remain** in their condition they were in when they were called (saved) is his repeated message to the saints at Corinth....

1 Corinthians 7:8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they **remain** even as I.

1 Corinthians 7:17 Only, as the Lord **has assigned to each one**, as God has called each, in this manner **let him walk**. And so I direct in all the churches.

1 Corinthians 7:20 Each man must **remain** in that condition in which he was called.

1 Corinthians 7:24 Brethren, each one is to **remain** with God in that condition in which he was called.

1 Corinthians 7:26 I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to **remain** as he is.

1 Corinthians 7:40 But in my opinion she is happier if she **remains** as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

Whatever our place allotted to us by Providence, that for us is the post of duty and honor.

God estimates us, not by the position we are in, but by the way in which we fill it.

-- T Edwards

**Utley** - The NKJV is more literal and keeps the wordplay "let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called"

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, (Eph 4:1+)

**Guzik** - This principle applies across a broad spectrum—married or unmarried, circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free. We can seek God's best and be used by Him right where we are. Of course, let each one remain with God in that calling in which he was called doesn't mean that we are to continue in a sinful course or occupation once we are saved. "That is, supposing that he was in an honest course of life; for we read in the Acts that the conjurers burnt their books, and unlawful courses of life must not be adhered to after men have once given up their names to Christ." (Trapp)

**NET NOTE** on **called** - "Calling" in Paul is God's work of drawing people to faith in Christ. As in 1:26, calling here stands by metonymy for a person's circumstances when he becomes a Christian.

### **Related Resource:**

- [Utley's Topic - The Called](#)

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### **Gil Rugh: What Need Not Change as a Believer**

Once someone becomes saved and has a heart to serve the Lord, all sorts of questions tend to arise:

- Should I quit my job and go into the ministry? No

- Should I abstain from sexual relations in my marriage? No
- Should I divorce my unsaved spouse? No
- Should I become circumcised like the Jews? No
- Should I change something in my physical and social circumstances?

The immediate point of the context is when you get saved that doesn't mean that there should necessarily be any change in your marriage relationship. ("If I had known the Lord before, I would never have married this person . . .")

God has been working in your life all along - even before your conversion. When God sovereignly called you, it was in the context of physical circumstances that He had orchestrated. Certain things are inconsistent with being a child of God; but most of our physical circumstances can continue on without negatively impacting our spiritual relationship.

Changing your outward circumstances won't improve your spiritual relationship with God. Submission to the will of God is what is important. These physical matters are important to the world but should not shape our thinking in terms of our relationship with our God.

**Bruce Barton - STAY THERE** - Often we are so concerned about what we could be doing for God somewhere else that we miss great opportunities right where we are. Paul says that when someone becomes a Christian, he or she should usually continue with the work he or she has previously been doing—provided it isn't immoral or unethical. Every job can become Christian work when you realize that the purpose of your life is to honor, serve, and speak out for Christ. Because God has placed you where you are, look carefully for opportunities to serve him there. After all, if God found you there, God can certainly use you there!

**Spurgeon - Devotional** - Some persons have the foolish notion that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible women. Alas! how many would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case. Beloved, it is not office, it is earnestness; it is not position, it is grace which will enable us to glorify God. God is most surely glorified in that cobbler's stall, where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Saviour's love, aye, glorified far more than in many a prebendal stall where official religiousness performs its scanty duties. The name of Jesus is glorified by the poor unlearned carter as he drives his horse, and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow labourer by the roadside, as much as by the popular divine who, throughout the country, like Boanerges, is thundering out the gospel. God is glorified by our serving him in our proper vocations. Take care, dear reader, that you do not forsake the path of duty by leaving your occupation, and take care you do not dishonour your profession while in it. Think little of yourselves, but do not think too little of your callings. Every lawful trade may be sanctified by the gospel to noblest ends. Turn to the Bible, and you will find the most menial forms of labour connected either with most daring deeds of faith, or with persons whose lives have been illustrious for holiness. Therefore be not discontented with your calling. Whatever God has made your position, or your work, abide in that, unless you are quite sure that he calls you to something else. Let your first care be to glorify God to the utmost of your power where you are. Fill your present sphere to his praise, and if he needs you in another he will show it you. This evening lay aside vexatious ambition, and embrace peaceful content.

### **William MacDonald - Truths to Live By**

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." (1 Cor. 7:20)

When a person becomes a Christian, he might think that he has to make a clean break with everything associated with his former life. To correct this thinking, the Apostle Paul lays down the general rule that a person should remain in the same calling in which he was at the time of his conversion. Let us consider this rule and suggest what it means and what it does not mean.

In its immediate context, the verse applies to a special marriage relationship. It is the case where one partner gets saved but the other does not. What should the believer do? Should he divorce his wife? No, says Paul, he should remain in that marriage relationship with the hope that his partner will be converted through his testimony.

In general, Paul's rule means that conversion does not require the violent disruption or forcible overthrow of pre-salvation relationships and associations that are not expressly forbidden by Scripture. For instance, a Jew need not resort to surgery in order to obliterate the physical mark of his Jewishness. Neither should a believing Gentile submit to some physical change like circumcision in order to distinguish him from the heathen. Physical features or marks are not what really matter. What God wants to see is obedience to His commandments.

A man who is a slave at the time of his new birth should not rebel against his servitude and thus bring trouble and punishment upon himself. He can be a good slave and a good Christian at the same time. Social position and class distinctions do not matter with God. However, if a slave can obtain his freedom by legitimate means, he should do so.

So much for what Paul's rule means. It should be obvious that there are important exceptions to the rule. For instance, it does not mean that a man in an ungodly occupation should continue in it. If a man is a bartender or operates a house of prostitution or a gambling casino, he will know by spiritual instinct that he has to make a change.

Another exception to the general rule has to do with religious associations. A new convert must not continue in any system where the great fundamentals of the Christian faith are denied. He must separate himself from any church where the Savior is dishonored. This would also apply to membership in social clubs where the Name of Christ is banned or even unwelcome. Loyalty to the Son of God requires that a believer resign from all such.

To summarize, then, the rule is that a new believer should remain in the calling in which he was called unless that calling is sinful and dishonoring to the Lord. He does not have to break with past associations unless they are clearly forbidden by the Word of God.

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**Peter Kennedy** - John Wesley was the most prominent evangelist of the eighteenth century. He made his mark both in Great Britain and the United States and was the driving force in the establishment of the Methodist church.

Wesley was forty-eight when he married Mary Vazeille. He had never been married before and Mary was the widow of a prominent London merchant. She had known John and his brother Charles for about two years. Charles was "thunderstruck" when he heard of his brother's intentions to marry her. Mary was known as a vulgar woman prone to hysteria.

Soon the problems others saw became apparent in the marriage. John traveled a great deal and Mary neither enjoyed traveling nor staying alone. John was set in his ways and showed little interest in domestic concerns. Mary did not possess a drive to serve the Lord. When John wrote consoling letters to widows Mary's jealousy flared. She wrote scandalous letters to newspapers lying about John's character. She had episodes of violence and finally left John after twenty years of marriage. Mary died alone and John wasn't informed of her death until three days after the funeral.

Everyone desires a happy marriage. But the Lord first calls us to do his will. Do you want to be married or wish to be single? Today in prayer thank the Lord for your marital status. This is God's will for you today so that you can live this day for His glory.

"Don't marry someone you can live with, marry someone you cannot live without."—Josh McDowell

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### **Charles Spurgeon - Proper Service**

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called 1 CORINTHIANS 7:20 KJV

Beloved, it is not office, it is earnestness; it is not position, it is grace that will enable us to glorify God. God is most surely glorified in that cobbler's stall, where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Savior's love. The name of Jesus is glorified by the poor, unlearned carter as he drives his horse and blesses his God or speaks to his fellow laborer by the roadside, as much as by the popular divine who throughout the country is thundering out the gospel.

God is glorified by our serving Him in our proper vocations. Take care that you do not forsake the path of duty by leaving your occupation, and take care you do not dishonor your profession while in it. Think little of yourselves, but do not think too little of your callings. Every lawful trade may be sanctified by the gospel to noblest ends. Turn to the Bible, and you will find the most menial forms of labor connected either with most daring deeds of faith or with persons whose lives have been illustrious for holiness.

Therefore be not discontented with your calling. Whatever God has made your position or your work, abide in that unless you are quite sure that He calls you to something else. Let your first care be to glorify God to the utmost of your power where you are. Fill your present sphere to His praise, and if He needs you in another, He will show it to you. Lay aside vexatious ambition, and embrace peaceful content.

**1 Corinthians 7:21** Were you called while a slave? **Do not worry** about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.

Amplified Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let that trouble you. But if you are able to gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.

Wuest Were you divinely summoned when you were a slave? Let not that be a concern to you. But on the assumption also that you are able to become a free man, the rather take advantage of the



opportunity, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you called as a slave? Do not worry about it. But if indeed you are able to be free, make the most of the opportunity.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:21 Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you-- but if you get a chance to be free, take it.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you--although if you can gain your freedom, do so.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:21 ὁ λοϋς κλ θης, μ σοι μελ τω· λλ ε κα ὀ νασαι λε θερος γεν σθαι, μ λλον χρ σαι.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:21 a servant -- wast thou called? be not anxious; but if also thou art able to become free - - use it rather;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:21 Wast thou called being a bondservant? Care not for it: nay, even if thou canst become free, use it rather.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you called while a slave? It should not be a concern to you. But if you can become free, by all means take the opportunity.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you a slave when you were called? Do not be concerned but, even if you can gain your freedom, make the most of it.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:21 So, if when you were called, you were a slave, do not think it matters -- even if you have a chance of freedom, you should prefer to make full use of your condition as a slave.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you a slave when you were called? That shouldn't bother you. However, if you have a chance to become free, take it.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:21 If you were a servant when you became a Christian, let it not be a grief to you; but if you have a chance to become free, make use of it.

- **called while:** 1Co 12:13 Ga 3:28 Col 3:11 1Ti 6:1-3 1Pe 2:18-24
- **worry:** Lu 10:40,41 12:29 1Co 21:34 Php 4:6,11 Heb 13:5 1Pe 5:7
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DO NOT WORRY ABOUT SOCIAL STATUS WHEN YOU WERE SAVED**

Paul moves from the more religious matters of circumcision or uncircumcision to social status of slaves versus free men. His basic point is still the same that they should be content in the situation in which they were called (saved).

**Were you called ([kaleo](#)) while a slave? Do not worry about it - Do not worry** is [present imperative with a negative](#) indicating that some of the slaves were worrying about their low estate in which they were **called**, and this may have been not just their social status but also their marital status. Christianity makes no change in our social or civil connections. Social status does not alter the fact that one can still please God as a slave. Some slaves may have been thinking that if they were only free, how much more they could do for God. Paul says stop that line of specious reasoning and bloom where you have been planted!

“Be a Christian where you are.”

-- William Barclay

**Barclay** - It must often have happened that when a man became a Christian he would have liked to break away from his job, and from the circle in which he moved, and begin a new life. But Paul insisted that the function of Christianity was not to give a man a new life, but to make his old life new. Let the Jew remain a Jew; let the Gentile remain a Gentile; race and the marks of race made

no difference. What did make a difference was the kind of life he lived.

**Barton** comments on the believer's status as slaves -- "The key phrase is **"don't let that worry you."** (NLT) The slaves should not feel that because they became Christians they could no longer serve as slaves because they deserved freedom. Unfortunately, they might have to keep living as slaves, but they should serve Christ wholeheartedly in their position.

**Guzik** - A slave can please God as a slave. He should not live his life thinking, "I can't do anything for God now, but I sure could if I was a free man." He can, and should, serve God as he is able to now.

Paul gives us a "commentary" on slaves of men who had become slaves of Christ and how they would still be fully able to serve the Lord Jesus Christ even in their position as slaves...

Slaves, **be obedient** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as **slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.** 7 With good will (present tense - also requires [dependence on the Holy Spirit](#) to continually) render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. (Ephesians 6:5-9+)

**Robertson** on **slave** in ancient world - It was usually a fixed condition and a slave could be a good servant of Christ (Col. 3:22+; Eph. 6:5+; Titus 2:9+), even with heathen masters.

**Slave** (1401) ([doulos](#) from [deo](#) = to bind) ([Click](#) additional notes on [doulos](#)) was an individual bound to another in servitude and conveys the idea of the slave's close, binding ties with his master, belonging to him, obligated to and desiring to do his will and in a permanent relation of servitude. In sum, the will of the **doulos** is consumed in the will of the master. A bondservant is one who surrendered wholly to another's will and thus devoted to another to the disregard of his own interest. Paul and Timothy were not their own but had been bought with the price of the blood of Christ. They were now the property of our Lord Jesus Christ and were His slaves exclusively. No man can serve two masters (Mt 6:24+). Paul and Timothy had been slaves of Sin (see note on ["the Sin"](#)) by their birth into Adam's likeness, but now they are slaves of Christ by their new, second birth. They had no will of their own, no business of their own, no time of their own and were acting for their Master, Christ; dependent upon Him and obedient to Him.

**Worry** (care, worry) (3199) [melo](#) means to concern oneself, to be of interest to. To care for, take an interest in. It is a care or concern to someone, i.e. someone cares. To be an object of care. **Melo** is used 10x in NT - Mt. 22:16; Mk. 4:38; Mk. 12:14; Lk. 10:40; Jn. 10:13; Jn. 12:6; Acts 18:17; 1 Co. 7:21; 1 Co. 9:9; 1 Pe 5:7

**But** Term of contrast - He has just said for those who were now believers in Christ to be content with their social status as slaves. However he does not say they should not try to better their social condition (this is different that a circumcised person getting a surgical procedure to reverse his circumcision).

**If you are able** ([dunamai](#)) **also to become free, rather do hat** - **Do** is ([chraomai](#)) in the [aorist imperative](#) meaning in essence "Go for it!" "make the most of the opportunity to get free." **Barclay** = "But if you can become free, grasp the opportunity." While the Christian slaves were not to let their slavery worry them, the option for attaining their freedom was left open and some slaves were able to buy or earn their freedom.

**Barclay** - Here there is a picture in Paul's mind. In the ancient world it was possible for a slave at a great effort to purchase his own freedom. This was how he did it. In the little spare time he had, he took odd jobs and earned a few coppers. His master had the right to claim commission even on these poor earnings. But the slave would deposit every farthing he could earn in the Temple of some god. When, it might be at the end of years, he had his complete purchase price laid up in the Temple, he would take his master there, the priest would hand over the money, and then symbolically the slave became the property of the god and therefore free of all men. That is what Paul is thinking of. The Christian man has been purchased by Christ; therefore, no matter what his human status may be, he is free of all men because he is the property of Christ.

As **Barton** explains these born again slaves "were free to seek to better themselves, for Paul says, if you get a chance to be free, take it. Obedience to God, as always, is what matters most (1 Cor 7:19)."

**Charles Hodge**: This of course is not intended to prohibit a man's endeavoring to better his condition. If he is a laborer when converted, he is not required to always remain a laborer. The meaning of the apostle evidently is, that no man should desire to change his status in life simply because he had become a Christian; as though he could not be a Christian and yet remain as he was. The Gospel is just as well suited to men in one vocation as in another, and its blessings can be enjoyed in all their fullness

equally in any condition of life."

**Free** (1658) **eleutheros** See related verb **eleutheroo**) is an adjective which means freedom to go wherever one likes, at liberty, possessing the capability of movement, exempt from restraint, obligation or liability, unconstrained, unfettered. In the Greek culture this word pictured one who can go wherever they please) (from Homer down). For example, in one secular writing we find this statement "the temple of Artemis at Ephesus is **open** (free) to all".

**Eleutheros** - 23x in 23v - Matt. 17:26; Jn. 8:33; Jn. 8:36; Rom. 6:20; Rom. 7:3; 1 Co. 7:21; 1 Co. 7:22; 1 Co. 7:39; 1 Co. 9:1; 1 Co. 9:19; 1 Co. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Gal. 4:22; Gal. 4:23; Gal. 4:26; Gal. 4:30; Gal. 4:31; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:16; Rev. 6:15; Rev. 13:16; Rev. 19:18

**Do** (make the most of) (5530) (**chraomai** from **chrao** = to lend) means to use, make use of, make the most of. In the present context the meaning is "to conduct oneself in a particular manner with regard to some person - 'to treat, to behave toward" (Louw-Nida)

**ILLUSTRATION** - Back in the nineteenth century our sixteenth president realized something radical must be done about slavery in our country. Unwilling to look the other way any longer, on **September 22, 1862**, he presented what came to be known as the Emancipation Proclamation, an official document condemning human slavery. Abraham Lincoln, realizing that slavery is completely against human dignity, officially abolished it from the United States on that day. Tragically, little changed in the daily life of our nation, even though the slaves were officially declared free. You know why; you've read the stories. The Civil War was still going on. The plantation owners never informed their slaves. The vast majority of the former slaves couldn't read, so they had no idea what the news was carrying. There was no mass media then to announce those kinds of presidential pronouncements. And so for the longest time, slavery continued even though it had been officially brought to an end. The war ended in **April 1865**. Do you know when Lincoln's declaration was officially enacted? When the people finally began to leave their enslaved lives and make their way toward freedom? **December 18, 1865—more than three years after he first released his proclamation.** Lincoln had been dead for months. The word traveled out of the streets of Washington and down into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, across the back roads of the Carolinas and into Georgia, then Alabama, then Mississippi, then Louisiana, then Texas, then Arkansas, announcing what had been true for more than a thousand days. Even then the word somehow either wasn't believed or wasn't acted upon. Those officially emancipated people, thinking slavery was the way they were condemned to exist, continued to live in bondage though they had been declared **free** men and women since the fall of 1862. ([Embraced by the Spirit The Untold Blessings of Intimacy with God](#))

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**Murray Harris - Roman slavery** (excerpt from recommended text "[Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ](#)")

There can be little doubt that 'Rome evolved the most complex slave system of all the peoples of the premodern world' (Patterson 1982: 88). The slave was so ubiquitous in Roman society that the standard text on the Roman law of slavery in the imperial period begins with the observation that 'there is scarcely a problem which can present itself, in any branch of law, the solution of which may not be affected by the fact that one of the parties to the transaction is a slave, and, outside the region of procedure, there are few branches of the law in which the slave does not prominently appear' (Buckland 1969: v).

Estimating ancient population numbers is not a precise science, but it would appear that at the end of the first century BC there were some two million slaves in Italy out of a total population of five to six million (see Hopkins 1978: 99–102). In Rome itself this 1:3 ratio of slave to free may have been higher; indeed, some have argued that the majority of those living in Rome at that time were of servile extraction—slaves, ex-slaves, or their descendants. If the slave-free ratio throughout the Empire was 1:5 (Rollins 1976: 830), and the population of the Empire at the time of Augustus was 50–60 million (Hopkins 1978: 102, following K. J. Beloch), there may have been ten to twelve million slaves under Roman jurisdiction. It was the opinion of Westermann that 'the numbers of slaves to be found in any group of [Christian] converts would presumably approximate the proportion of slaves to free, which existed in the particular town or city of each Christian congregation' (1955: 150).<sup>21</sup>

At all stages of Roman history, the number of slaves in a household reflected the owner's wealth and status. A poor citizen might have as few as one or two slaves, a senator as many as 400 or more, while the familia Caesaris, 'Caesar's household' (Phil. 4:22), was a network of some 20,000 slaves and freedmen, who cared for the administrative details of the Empire.

The prices of slaves varied, of course, according to supply and demand, and according to the slave's level of education and skill. In the Hellenistic period 500–600 denarii was a normal price for an unskilled male adult, but a skilled worker such as a vinedresser

could cost as much as 2,000 denarii (Jones 1974: 9f.). A denarius was a labourer's average daily pay. It is therefore clear that slaves were not inexpensive. To be seen in public with an entourage of slaves was to display one's wealth.

We should not imagine that slaves were confined to menial tasks. They served in a wide variety of roles. In fact, one scholar has drawn up a list of over 120 different duties and occupations! For example, some served as employees of a city or of the state, being salaried executives with heavy responsibilities. Others were employed in business as managers of shops or of ships. Others worked the land as farm labourers, often in chain gangs in the case of condemned criminals, and sometimes in appalling conditions. Or again, many worked in city households, as cooks or cleaners, as tutors or doctors, or as sexual partners. With regard to this variety of role and status, S. S. Bartchy (1992: 61, 68) appropriately notes that 'the only thing that slaves in the first century AD had completely in common was the fact of their enslavement', 'the fact that each of them had an owner'. Given the ubiquity of slaves and the bewildering variety of their roles, it is not surprising that slaves were not readily identifiable, either by outward appearance or by race or by speech or by occupation. Many, if not most, of the tasks assigned to slaves were also performed by free persons.

This range of tasks undertaken by slaves falls into two broad, distinct categories (cf. Justinian's Digest 32, 99): rural and agricultural on the one hand, including any work outside the city, such as manning the galleys or toiling in the mines; urban and administrative on the other hand, including household, municipal and imperial slavery. Rural slavery was often disagreeable; urban slavery, not infrequently quite tolerable, especially if master and slave worked side by side. A personal relationship between master and slave was more likely to be established with urban slaves who saw their master regularly than with rural slaves who rarely saw their master but worked under the supervision of an overseer who was usually a fellow-slave. In fact, dismissal from an urban to a rural familia was sometimes viewed as a punishment. Rural slaves did not in any sense share in the status of their master, but urban slaves often gained a certain distinction, apart from their particular role, from being the slave of a master who had social status and wealth. This was most apparent in the case of 'Caesar's household'. To be an imperial slave was to be in the employ of the most powerful figure of the time and so carried with it a sense of prestige, if not privilege. But even within this familia there were clearly defined gradations of status.

Another way in which ancient writers classified slaves was according to their responsibility, whether managerial or menial. Most slaves held menial posts as household servants or agricultural workers, but a minority held managerial positions of trust in the city or country, frequently indistinguishable from positions held by free persons. These 'socially mobile' slaves often enjoyed a higher standard of living than many free citizens. The Roman writer Suetonius notes that the grammarian Gaius Melissus preferred to be the slave of Maecenas, the leading literary patron under Augustus, than to be free, although he was later granted his freedom (Grammarians 5. 21, cited by Martin 1990: 194 n. 164).

Slaves, then, did not form a single, homogeneous class. At one end of the spectrum were the 'penal slaves' (*servi poenae*) condemned for life to the mines; at the other, 'Caesar's slaves' (*Caesaris servi*), the attendants of the emperor. In between these extremes were those slaves who themselves owned slaves. A *servus vicarius* (lit. 'a slave taking the place [of another slave]') was an under-slave bought and kept by another slave to assist him in his work. A first-century inscription from Rome speaks of a financier of the emperor Tiberius who had sixteen under-slaves (*vicarii*):

To Musicus Scurranus [slave] of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, superintendent of the Gallic Treasury for the province of Lyon: [Dedicated] to him, as he well deserved, by those of his under-slaves who were with him at Rome when he died (ILS 1514 [= CIL 6. 5197], cited by Wiedemann 1981: 123f.).

Perhaps the most notable first-century example of 'a slave who made good' was Marcus Antonius Pallas, who accumulated great wealth, and, as a freedman, became Claudius's financial secretary with slaves of his own (see Oost 1958). Among slaves who were not part of the imperial familia, the most famous was probably Epictetus (c. AD 55–135), the Stoic philosopher whose lectures and *Manual*, published posthumously, greatly influenced the emperor Marcus Aurelius.

In Roman law, slaves were 'chattels' (*mancipia*), 'mortal objects' (*res mortales*) (Justinian's Digest 21. 1. 23. 3). A Roman could buy, rent or sell a slave, as he would a piece of property. An owner's right to use and dispose of his slave as he wished was called *dominium*, 'the right of absolute ownership'. Varro, the Roman politician and polymath, described a slave as 'a kind of talking tool' (*instrumenti genus vocale*; *De Re Rust.* 1. 17. 1). Owners of an estate would classify slaves as 'articulate equipment' as opposed to oxen which were 'inarticulate equipment'.

This concept of the slave as 'property' (*mancipium*) and the term 'slave' (*servus*) itself were both regularly traced by the Romans to a military origin. Slaves were *mancipia* because they were those captured by force of arms (*manu capiantur*; Justinian's Digest 1. 5. 4). A *servus* was someone 'kept safe' or 'preserved' (*servare*), that is, not slain, in war. 'Slaves (*servi*) gain their name because generals have a custom of selling their captives, thus saving (*servare*) them instead of killing them' (Digest 1. 5. 4).

Being a mere object (*res*), not a subject, in the eyes of the law, the slave was 'rightless'. He lacked the right of recourse to the law for protection and could not be called as a free witness.<sup>28</sup> Nor could a slave own property, make a contract that was legally binding,

hold public office or serve in the army. Only when a slave was freed and became a citizen did he gain the right to become a property-owner, to act as his own legal representative, to hold office, and to serve in the army. So a slave was effectively marginalized and rendered powerless.

Yet we must recognize that although legally slaves were objects, devoid of rights, in practice their personhood was not denied. They were permitted carefully circumscribed privileges. First, there was common-law cohabitation (*contubernium*, lit. 'tent-companionship'), which was clearly distinguished from legal marriage (*conubium*). But a child born to a female slave belonged to her owner, irrespective of the status of the father. Second, slaves could be members of various religious, social or funerary clubs or 'associations' (*collegia*), albeit with their masters' authorization (Buckland 1969: 74f.; Barrow 1968: 164–168; Bömer 1957–63). Third, it was customary for masters to allow their slaves access to property or money (*peculium*) that they could use as working capital 'borrowed' from the master. This 'private purse', a symbol of slaves' sought-after independence, was technically always owned by the master but in practice it could be used at the slave's discretion, ultimately to purchase his freedom. Fourth, one trace of the recognition that a slave was a person like any other, before the gods, was the fact that prior to manumission he was usually compelled to take an oath, placing him under a religious obligation, when free, to adhere to the promise of *operae* ('works'), a work commitment to his former master, now his patron (Buckland 1969: 73f.). Fifth, 'they could attend the theatre, the gladiatorial games, and the races and might, upon occasion, share in municipal banquets' (Westermann 1955: 108). Further indications of a slave's personhood in Roman practice are his criminal liability and his capacity to become a Roman citizen through formal manumission and to act for his master contractually (Szakats 1975: 39).

There were two main ways in which slaves gained relief from their situation: they could run away or their master could set them free, that is, he could 'manumit' them. In one case the slave took the initiative; in the other, the master. These two means of relief, absconding and manumission, must be considered in more detail.

Runaway slaves created a massive problem in the late Republic and early Principate (see Bellen 1971). During the civil wars, Augustus returned 30,000 runaway slaves to their masters for suitable punishment (*Res Gestae* 25)—punishment that ranged from death by crucifixion, to branding on the forehead with the letter F or the three letters FVG, standing for the word *FVGITVVS*, 'runaway (slave)' (see further Coleman-Norton 1951: 176). Under Roman law it was an offence to harbour a runaway (Justinian's Digest 11. 3. 1. 2), but T. Mommsen has argued convincingly that the relevant law (*lex Fabia de plagiaris*) did not extend to the provinces, so that Paul was not legally obliged to return the runaway slave Onesimus to Philemon, his owner (whether or not Philemon was a Roman citizen). However that be, when a slave ran away, a master had reason for anxiety, for slaves were a costly investment (see above) and the apprehension of a runaway involved costs such as the employment of a slave-catcher,<sup>35</sup> not to speak of the reduced resale value of a slave with a history of absconding and a master's concern that other slaves in the household or on the estate may have co-operated in enabling the escape.

The frequency of slaves' efforts to run away illustrates the fact that a slave's chief desire was to gain his freedom. Epictetus, once himself a slave, put it simply: 'it is the slave's prayer that he be set free immediately' (*Diss.*, 4. 1. 33). Indeed, if there was no prospect of freedom, as was the case for criminals working in the mines or on the rural estates, the lot of slaves was intolerable (cf. Cicero, *Rab. Perd.* 5. 15). But most urban slaves gained their freedom through manumission by their thirties at the latest (Lampe 1992b: 22). Expressed another way, the urban slave would serve his master between ten and twenty years before manumission.

It is not difficult to identify a slave's motives for seeking to merit or gain manumission. This would end the humiliation of being under the will and at the mercy of another human being. It would begin to reestablish his self-esteem as he acquired relative independence—freedom of choice with regard to employment and movement. He would be free from seizure as property and from involuntary sale back into slavery. If his master was a Roman citizen and he was manumitted formally, he would gain Roman citizenship (*de Visscher* 1946) and with it the right of legal marriage (*matrimonium*) and access to the courts and to public office. Emancipation would also enable him to begin a family line of free persons and citizens who could own property. And sometimes manumission led to marriage to the owner's daughter or son, or even to the owner himself.

Motivation for a slave-owner's act of manumission was varied and usually many-sided, but while gratitude for a slave's past faithful service sometimes prompted a master to act, self-interest of some sort was generally the governing factor. It may be the desire to marry the slave or to formalize a sexual relationship by marriage, the wish to gain a reputation for benevolence and magnanimity, or the hope of promoting eager compliance among slaves prior to their manumission. From the viewpoint of Roman society itself, manumission aimed at, or had the result of, integrating outsiders into society,<sup>40</sup> enlarging the number of potential soldiers, and increasing the political power of the wealthy whose freedmen would vote for their patron.

There is plentiful evidence that during the last century BC and the first century AD, hundreds of thousands of slaves gained their freedom. We can gather the extent of manumission by examining statements about the 5% tax that was levied on freed slaves and deposited in the sacred treasury. From such data for the period 81–49 BC, T. Frank deduced that half a million slaves were freed during that time. If this tax was designed 'to discourage manumission and preserve the native Roman character of society, then it

must be pronounced a dismal failure' (Duff 1958: 30). In any case, many masters avoided paying this tax by means of informal as opposed to formal manumission. Augustus met this threat to the distinctiveness of Roman civilization by the *lex Fufia Caninia* of 2 BC, which on a sliding scale limited the number of slaves that a master could free in his will. For example, if 100–500 slaves were owned, the limit was one-fifth, and the upper limit was set at 100.

But manumission never brought absolute freedom, for in Roman society a manumitted slave entered a client—patron relationship with his former master, a relationship which involved particular duties prescribed by the patron. Such patronage was ubiquitous. As E. Ferguson (1987: 45) observes, 'Everyone from slave to aristocrat felt bound to display respect to someone more powerful than himself, up to the emperor.'

Scholars are disagreed about the general lot of slaves in the Roman Empire in the first century AD. Clearly the treatment of slaves varied greatly, depending on many variables, such as the nature of the slave's work, how he was acquired by his owner, where he worked (the city or the country, in a family setting or on a plantation), whether there was the hope of manumission, and the temperament of the master.

At one extreme we know of cases where masters showed kindness to their slaves. Pliny the Younger is a notable example. When one of his highly gifted slaves, called Zosimus, contracted tuberculosis, Pliny sent him to Egypt to recuperate and later to the farm of his friend Valerius Paulinus. 'Nature has so made us that nothing serves to incite and inflame our love for something as does the fear of losing it—a sentiment I have experienced regarding Zosimus more than once' (Ep. 5. 19). Also, Pliny permitted his slaves to make 'a kind of will which I observe as carefully as if it were valid in law' (Ep. 8. 16), although legally slaves could not own or bequeath property. Then there is the general admonition of the Stoic philosopher Seneca, who, in one of his Moral Letters, bids masters cultivate their slaves' respect, not their fear: 'The person who shows respect also shows love, and love and fear cannot be mingled. So I judge you to be entirely right in not wishing to be feared by your slaves, and in lashing them merely with words; only dumb animals are admonished by the whip' (Ep. 47. 18–19).

At the opposite extreme, since slavery was based on coercion, it was often true that fear and mutual hostility governed the master—slave relationship. The Roman historian Tacitus expressed a wide-spread sentiment: 'Now that we have within our households nations with different customs and foreign cults or none, you will never coerce such a mixture of humanity except by fear' (Ann. 14. 44). This mutual hostility is epitomized in the common Roman proverb, 'There are as many enemies as there are slaves' (*totidem hostes esse quot servos*; Seneca, Ep. 47. 5). And so we read of horrendous punishments inflicted on slaves, such as crucifixion, the breaking of bones, amputations, hot tar, restraining collars and the rack.

Now on the premise that ancient sources generally mention only what is exceptional practice, it could be argued that such punishments were uncommon. If slaves were expensive commodities, would masters maim or kill them for minor infractions? We may grant that the punishments mentioned above were probably extreme. But there must be limits to our suspicion of the sources, for 'Roman literature abounds with examples of incidental cruelty to individual domestic slaves' (Hopkins 1978: 118).<sup>47</sup> Without fear of contradiction we may say that the flogging of slaves was simply routine. In the comedies of the Roman satirist Plautus, the slave is by definition 'he who is whipworthy'.

There can be no doubt that there was an improvement in the west of the Roman Empire with regard to the treatment of slaves, both legally and practically, during the first three centuries AD; in the eastern provinces slavery had always been more humane. This amelioration of slave conditions came about partly as a result of the rising number of slaves born in their master's house and therefore to greater responsibility and privilege within the family, but also it was partly due to a growing public antipathy towards the arbitrary power of the *paterfamilias* ('head of a family' or 'proprietor of an estate') and to the increasing humanitarianism among the general populace. However, humanitarian gestures by legislation or by individual masters were almost always prompted by self-interest, viz. the desire to preserve the value of the slave for the greatest possible return on the investment.

It is impossible to ignore the negative stigmatic associations of slavery during the Roman Republic and Empire (see Bradley 1994: 144f., 176–180). The name 'slave' (*servus*) was regarded as a term of disgrace and insult (see Vogt 1972: 94). When Tacitus describes crucifixion as 'a punishment belonging to slaves' (*servile supplicium*; Hist. 4. 11), he means that the worst form of death is appropriate and reserved for the lowest grade of human beings. This is a pointed testimony to what T. E. J. Wiedemann (1987: 25) aptly calls 'the conceptual inferiority of slaves'. Also, slavery was seen, especially in legal texts, as tantamount to death, while the members of one private club of slaves spoke of themselves as 'comrades in death [*commorientes*]' (Barrow 1968: 168). So we must demur at D. Tidball's (1984: 115) contention that 'by the time of Paul it [slavery] was not a severe and cruel institution', and G. Corcoran's (1980a: 3) view that 'slavery as Jesus and his audience knew it was essentially benign and accepted as normal'. 'Accepted as normal'—yes. 'Essentially benign'—no.

The final evaluation of Hopkins (1978: 121, 123) may stand:

The viciousness of Roman slavery, the exploitation, cruelty and mutual hostility are worth stressing because modern accounts



often focus instead on those elements in Roman philosophy, literature and law which point to the humanitarian treatment of slaves, and to the willing loyalty of some slaves to their masters ... The mitigation of slavery by philosophical belief and imperial decree probably made little impression on the routine corruption implicit in a elite culture which took the massed subservience of slaves for granted.

**1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.**

Amplified For he who as a slave was summoned in [to union with] the Lord is a freedman of the Lord, just so he who was free when he was called is a bond servant of Christ (the Messiah).

Wuest for the slave who was divinely summoned by the Lord is the Lord's freedman. Likewise, he who was divinely summoned when he was a freedman, is Christ's slave. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:22 For the one who was called in the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. In the same way, the one who was called as a free person is Christ's slave.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:22 And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:22 γρ ν κυρ κληθε ς δο λος πελε θερος κυρ ου σ ν, μο ως λε θερος κληθε ς δο λ ς σ τιν Χριστο .

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:22 for he who is in the Lord -- having been called a servant -- is the Lord's freedman: in like manner also he the freeman, having been called, is servant of Christ:

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:22 For he that was called in the Lord being a bondservant, is the Lord's freedman: likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's bondservant.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who is called by the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called as a free man is Christ's slave.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:22 For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:22 For the slave called in the Lord is a freed person in the Lord, just as the free person who has been called is a slave of Christ.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:22 You see, anyone who was called in the Lord while a slave, is a freeman of the Lord; and in the same way, anyone who was free when called, is a slave of Christ.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:22 If the Lord called you when you were a slave, you are the Lord's free person. In the same way, if you were free when you were called, you are Christ's slave.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who was a servant when he became a Christian is the Lord's free man; and he who was free when he became a Christian is the Lord's servant.

- **is the Lord's freedman:** Lu 1:74,75 Joh 8:32-36 Ro 6:18-22 Ga 5:1,13 Eph 6:5,6 Col 3:22-24 Phm 1:16 1Pe 2:16
- **is Christ's:** 1Co 9:19 Ps 116:16 Ro 1:1 Ga 1:10 Col 4:12 1Pe 2:16 2Pe 1:1 Jude 1:1
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For ([gar](#)) term of explanation. Paul goes on to example that while they may have been slaves to men, they were set free in Christ

and belonged to Him (1 Cor 7:23).

**Robertson** - Christ is now the owner of the Christian and Paul rejoices to call himself Christ's slave (δουλος [doulos]). But Christ set us free from sin by paying the ransom (λυτρον [lutron]) of his life on the Cross (Matt. 20:28; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:1). Christ is thus the patronus of the libertus who owes everything to his patronus. He is no longer the slave of sin (Rom. 6:6, 18), but a slave to God (Rom. 6:22).

One is reminded of Jesus' words in John 8:31-32, 36

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 **"So if the Son makes you free (eleutheroo), you will be free (eleutheros) indeed.**

**Freedman (558)** (apeleutheros from apó = from + eleútheros = free) means a freedman, an emancipated slave. Found only in 1Co 7:22 and indicates that the slavery which may be a part of relations on earth does not exist in the new sphere of the divine calling.

**He who was called (kaleo) in the Lord while a slave(doulos), is the Lord's freedman** - NLT = "And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, the Lord has now set you free from the awful power of sin." **The Lord's freedman** means that Jesus was their owner as explained in the following verse.

**Likewise he who was called (kaleo) while free (eleutheros), is Christ's slave (doulos)** - This person was not a slave of men, but by grace has become a slave of Christ, the Perfect Master. Though free from enslavement to men, they were still slaves to the power of Sin, but Paul describes their (and our) spiritual emancipation writing....

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from **Sin** (PERSONIFIED AS A SLAVEMASTER), you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness (NOTE HOW SIN "BEGETS" MORE SIN), so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification (HOLINESS). 20 For when you were slaves of **Sin**, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from **Sin** and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.(Ro 6:17-22+)

#### Related Resources:

- Spiritual Paradox in the Christian Life - free but a slave of Christ
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible - [Slave, Slavery](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament - [Slave, Slavery](#)
- Baker's Evangelical Dictionary [Slave, Slavery](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Slave; Slavery](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Slaves and Slavery](#)

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#### Find Your Own Calcutta

Read: 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you. —Mark 5:19

"Find your own Calcutta." That was the response Mother Teresa sent to a woman who wanted to join her in ministering to one of India's most crowded cities.

Was there a touch of romanticism in the woman's desire to leave all her past behind and serve in a distant, exotic land? Whatever her motives, the terse advice she received is a discerning word we all should heed. It captures the essence of Paul's message to the church at Corinth: Serve the Lord in whatever situation He has placed you (1 Cor. 7:17-24).

I recall the illusion-puncturing challenge John Alexander, one-time president of InterVarsity, gave to a group of students: "What have

you done this past year to make a helpful difference within a mile of your home?" The hungry, the suffering, the unevangelized at our doorstep lack the more appealing aura of the needy souls elsewhere on the planet. But the ones closest to us are those whose needs we are best equipped to meet.

Let's take personally what Jesus said to a man He had set free from demons: "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you" (Mk. 5:19).

If we look around us through the eyes of Jesus, we're sure to find a Calcutta close by.

The mission field is closer to home than you may think.

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#### 1 Corinthians 7:22

The image of a duck flying through the air with an arrow embedded in her body is still fresh in my memory. A local newspaper carried the story and picture of a mallard duck that had eluded rescuers who wanted to remove the foreign object. A couple of months later a Canada goose flew into Wisconsin with the same problem. A young bow hunter had hit his mark, but his arrow hadn't stopped the bird. She had evaded game wardens, avoided tranquilizer-laced grain, and even dodged cannon-fired nets. After about a month, apparently exhausted from her injury, the goose was caught with a fishing net. Soon after surgery, veterinarians returned her to freedom. If geese could think, she probably wondered why she had tried so hard and for so long to elude her captors.

The experience of these reluctant captives reminds me of the men Christ spoke to in John 8. They too were slow to realize the seriousness of their condition. They didn't understand Christ's motives. To them, He looked like a captor. He wanted them to surrender their lives to Him. He asked them to become His disciples. He implored them to become spiritual bond-slaves. They were unable to comprehend that by surrendering they could "be made free" (v. 33).

Is it possible we have forgotten that real freedom is found only in being secure in Christ? This relates not only to our ultimate salvation but also to our daily walk with the Lord.

As servants of Christ, we are bound to be free. —M. R. De Haan.II

Salvation produces a change within that releases the chains of sin

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#### **Robert Hawker - The Lord's free-man.—1 Corinthians 7:22.**

And who is the Lord's free-man? Jesus himself hath given a decided answer to this inquiry. "Whosoever committeth sin (saith Jesus) is the servant of sin." Now as by nature we are all born in this state of bondage to sin, and by practice have fully manifested the stock of servitude to which by nature we belong; we are vassals and slaves to sin, and in bondage to all the dreadful consequences. "But," saith Jesus, "if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed!" (John 8:34–36.) Hence, then, my soul, learn what it is to be the Lord's free-man, and the blessed effects resulting from this freedom. If this be thy portion, thou art no longer in bondage to "the curse of God's broken law." Jesus hath freed them from this; having "redeemed thee from the curse of the law, in being made himself a curse." Thou art no longer under "the penalty of sin;" Jesus delivered thee from the wrath to come, when "he, who knew no sin, became sin for his people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him." Thou art no longer under "the dominion of sin;" Jesus hath taken away this power also; for "the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus, hath made his people free from the law of sin and death;" thou art loosed from "the yoke of Satan;" for by the conquest of Christ on the cross, thou art "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Thou art freed from "the slavish fears of death;" for through death Jesus hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and hath delivered them "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Are these among the privileges of the Lord's free-man? Is it thus to be a citizen of the Jerusalem above, which is free, and the mother of us all? Hail then, thou almighty Lord of thy people! It is thou who hast redeemed them to God by thy blood! And therefore to thee we wave the palm of victory, ascribing all our salvation to God and the Lamb!

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#### **Slaves or Freeman - Henry Morris**

"For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant" (1 Cor. 7:22).

Most of us today, rejoicing in our freedoms (of religion, of press, of speech, etc.), tend to forget that these had been purchased for us at great cost. Many of the first Christians, in fact, were actually slaves in the great Roman Empire. The word "servant," as used in the above text, is translated from the Greek *doulos*, the proper meaning of which is "bondservant," or "slave."

The early Israelites also were slaves for hundreds of years before God empowered Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Later, many

were again carried into captivity by the armies of Assyria and Babylon and eventually Rome, continuing to suffer virtual enslavement for many years.

The American colonists were never real slaves, of course, but they often considered themselves as essentially in bondage to the king of England, and their writers frequently compared the American Revolution to the Israelites gaining their freedom from Egypt. An even more apt comparison, however, would have been the setting of the slaves free in the Civil War.

The most appropriate analogy of all, however, applies when a man or woman, having been under control by lifelong sin, is finally set free in Christ, who came to "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

Yet those early believers were never encouraged by Paul to fight for their physical freedom (which would come in good time) but rather to serve their masters "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Eph. 6:7). He would tell us today not to boast in our own freedom, but to be thankful and to consider ourselves as bondservants to our own Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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### **James Smith - CHRIST'S FREE MEN.**

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

There are many like these Jews, who say, "We never were in bondage to any man," while every step they take you hear the clang of their shackles. While these boastful Jews talked of their freedom they were—

1. In bondage to the Romans.
2. In bondage to the letter of the law.
3. In bondage to pride and unbelief. Christ makes us free from—
  1. The power of our enemies.
  2. The broken law.
  3. From the pride of life.

It is a glorious freedom, but we shall notice—

- I. What it is Not. It is—
  1. NOT FREEDOM FROM BODILY SUFFERING. The eleventh chapter of the Hebrews is abundant evidence to this.
  2. NOT FREEDOM FROM DIVINE CHASTISEMENTS. To be without these is to be without a very impressive evidence of sonship (Heb. 12:8).
  3. NOT FREEDOM FROM THE TEMPTATION OF SATAN (Matt. 4). The disciple will not escape, for the Master did not. "But count it all joy" (James 1:2).
  4. NOT FREEDOM FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN (1 John 1). This freedom we shall have when He shall change this vile body.
- II. What this Freedom Is. It is to be made free from the—
  1. CURSE OF THE LAW (Gal. 3:10). "The law was holy, just and good" (a reflection of the Divine character), but the holy, just, and good can curse where there is violation and sin.
  2. GUILT OF SIN (Rom. 8:33). There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Who shall lay anything to their charge?
  3. DOMINION OF SIN (Rom. 6). Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.
  4. POWER OF DARKNESS (Col. 1:13). Being liberated by the translating power of grace, we are no longer under the rule of Satan, but under the blessed government of the Prince of Peace.
  5. FEAR OF MAN (Acts 4:18-20). The fear of man brings a snare and puts it on the hands, the feet, the tongue, the mind, and the heart, and hinders the Holy Ghost from working through us.
  6. STING OF DEATH (1 Cor. 15:56, 57). "O death, where is thy sting?" The sting of death was sin. Sin was taken away by the Lamb of God. So the sting is gone, and we have freedom from it.
- III. The Responsibilities of the Freed. Let us not forget that ours is the—
  1. FREEDOM OF SONS (1 John 3). Dishonour not the Father.
  2. FREEDOM OF SERVANTS (1 Cor. 7:22). Be faithful to the Master.
  3. FREEDOM OF WORSHIPPERS (Heb. 10:19). Come with boldness.
- IV. How He makes Free.
  1. BY COMING TO HIM.
  2. BY RESTING IN HIM.
  3. BY WORKING FOR HIM. "Whom the Son makes free are free indeed" (John 8:36).

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Franklin Graham, president of the relief and evangelistic organization Samaritan's Purse, encounters people around the world willing to sacrifice the promise of gold for the kingdom of God. In his book *Living Beyond the Limits*, he tells of one such man, Steve Duncan.

"Steve was a well-educated Boston man and a skilled surgeon. He was preparing to leave for Angola as soon as he could raise support and make the logistical arrangements. Steve made quite an impression on me as he told of his desire to serve the Lord in a foreign country. I knew he could be earning enough money to buy anybody's version of the great American Dream. Instead, all he talked about was taking God's gospel to Angola—a country that at the time was in the throes of a particularly vicious and ugly civil war."

Steve, like Paul the apostle, is just one example of a modern-day bondservant of Christ. He works long hours in a dangerous place without financial compensation. He has given up boardrooms and surgical suites for bunkers and grass huts, living for eternal rather than temporal rewards.

Where is God calling you to work for Christ instead of cash?

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The average church member would do well to look in his concordance and see how many columns it takes to list all the "serve, servant, " and service" references.

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### **Horatius Bonar - THE SERVANT AND THE FREEMAN OF CHRIST**

"For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant."—1 COR. 7:22.

A CHRISTIAN is one who is "called," not by self or man, but by God. The voice that calls him is almighty, irresistible. He must needs obey. He is born "of the will of God."

He is called "in the Lord." This refers not so much to his being called by the Lord, as to his being called to be "in the Lord." Christ in him and he in Christ, this is his standing. As once he was "in the world," and in himself, so now he is "in the Lord."

He is not of any one nation. According to the flesh, he may be a Jew or a Gentile, a Greek or a Roman, a barbarian, a Scythian, an African, an Indian, or a Briton. According to the Spirit, his nationality is not of earth; his citizenship is in heaven.

He is not of any special condition or rank. He may be a servant or a master, a peasant or a monarch, a merchant or a ploughman, a man of learning or a half-witted beggar.

Yet these two things are common to each,—he is called, and he is in the Lord. The other things connected with him are unessential and unenduring. These two only are important and abiding.

Keeping this in mind, the apostle takes up the two great conditions of society in his day,—master and slave,—in order to bring out the true and high bearing of Christianity on these. If you be a servant, what then? If a master, what then? These are the two questions he answers.

The answers to these two questions are contained in these two statements. A Christian is the Lord's freeman; a Christian is Christ's servant.

I. A Christian is the Lord's freeman. This expression means the following things:—

- (1.) He was once a slave. He was not born free. He did not free himself. Like Israel in Egypt, he was "delivered."
- (2.) He was set free by the Lord. The name of his liberator is a glorious one; one betokening power and authority. His former masters were sin, the flesh, the devil. From these this mighty Lord hath set him free.
- (3.) As a free man he still belongs to Christ. Nay, he belongs more to Him than ever; more to Him than to his former masters. A new tie has been formed between him and the Lord; the tie of liberty; the tie of love; the tie of gratitude.
- (4.) His life is one of liberty. There is no return to bondage. All is the joy of freedom, Christ's own freedom; true, heavenly liberty; liberty in every part; perfect throughout; yet not the liberty of self-will.
- (5.) His is liberty which earthly service cannot affect. He may be a slave or a prisoner, he is still the Lord's freeman. Hands, and feet, and body may be in chains, he is as free as ever. No earthly bondage can intermeddle with or neutralise this liberty.

But how and when does all this begin? In what way is it carried on?

- (1.) Ye are bought with a price. A ransom has been paid for our liberation; and the spring of all our liberty comes from this ransom. Christ hath redeemed us. We are redeemed not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ.

(2.) If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Our liberty is the direct work of the Son of God. He unbinds us and disimprisons us. He became a bondman for us. He took our chains and prison that we might have his liberty.

(3.) The truth shall make you free. The truth revealed in Christ contains in it all liberating elements and ingredients. It neutralises and undoes all that made us slaves. And from the moment that we know it we are free! Our belief of this liberating truth sets us at full liberty.

II. A Christian is Christ's servant. Freed from one service which is bondage, he enters another which is liberty. Though free, he is a servant! Free because a servant! A servant because free! Such is the wonderful yet happy contradiction. As Messiah is the Father's servant, come to do His will, so are we Messiah's servants, engaged to do His will.

Thus we are both freemen and servants, truly both. And we begin our liberty and our service at the same time and in the same way. That truth which sets us free, introduces us into service. The two, so far from being incompatible, are harmonious and helpful to each other.

If we are Christ's servants, then we wear His livery; we dwell in His house; we do His work; we fix our eye on Him; we merge our wills in His; we get His wages, His reward,—“Well done good and faithful servant.” Let us then realise and act out both our freemanship and our service faithfully and fully; at all times; all places; all conditions. Freemen, yet servants always! Servants, yet freemen always.

Let us close with the apostolic use of this truth. Are we masters? Let us remember we are Christ's servants, and only masters under Him; let this keep us humble and kind. We have a good, kind Master; let us be good and kind. Are we servants? Let not this trouble us or make us fretful. We are the Lord's freemen! That makes up for all. Though we were chained, imprisoned, exiled, like Paul at Rome, or John at Patmos, we are free! Nothing on earth can interfere with this privilege, or rob us of this honour; we are free indeed. Ours is glorious liberty.

#### 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought with a price; **do not become** slaves of men.

Amplified You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for by Christ]; then do not yield yourselves up to become [in your own estimation] slaves to men [but consider yourselves slaves to Christ].

Wuest At a price you were purchased. Do not go on becoming those who are subservient to men. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:23 God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:23 τιμης αγορηθητε μη γνεσθε δολοι υθροπων.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:23 with a price ye were bought, become not servants of men;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:23 Ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:23 You have been purchased at a price. Do not become slaves to human beings.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:23 You have been bought at a price; do not be slaves now to any human being.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought for a price. Don't become anyone's slaves.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:23 It is the Lord who has made payment for you: be not servants of men.



- **become:** Mt 23:8-11 Ga 2:4
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20+ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20For **you have been bought (agorazo) with a price:** therefore glorify God in your body.

Leviticus 25:42+ 'For they are My servants **whom I brought out from the land of Egypt;** they are not to be sold in a slave sale.

Acts 20:28+ "**Be on guard** for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which **He purchased (peripoieomai) with His own blood.**

Titus 2:14+ **Who gave Himself for us to redeem (lutroo) us from every lawless deed,** and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

1 Peter 1:18-19+ knowing that you were not **redeemed (lutroo)** with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but **with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.**

Revelation 5:9± And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and **purchased (agorazo) for God with Your blood** men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

## YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN

Whether you were called (saved) as a slave or a freedman, you were bought with the same price, the precious blood of the Lamb of God Who took away your sins forever (Jn 1:29+), and now both groups have One Master, One Lord, One King, the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Slaves in Roman times were expensive. They could be bought to be turned over to a temple ("freed" for service to a god) or, more often, to a new human owner. The slave of one master cannot be the slave of another. Anyone who is redeemed by Christ, who feels that he belongs to him, that his will is the supreme rule of action, and who performs all his duties not as a man-pleaser, but as if he is serving the Lord and not men (Ep 6:6,7), is inwardly free, whatever his external relations may be. This verse is a proper sequel to the previous one.

**You were bought (agorazo) with a price; do not become slaves (doulos) of men** - You is plural, referring to the entire church, whether slave or free. This is true of those who were slaves and free, for both were purchased by the blood of God's Son. Ponder that thought - **in His sight of inestimable worth!** In the previous chapter Paul wrote "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." (1 Cor 6:19-20+) **Do not become** is [present imperative with a negative](#) indicating some were becoming **slaves of men!** They were to stop becoming slaves of men! Paul's point is that they have an Owner, a Master, One Who has paid for them to be redeemed from bondage to Sin and set free in a servitude of grace, a servitude enabled by His Spirit, a servitude with one purpose, to bring Him glory now and forever and ever. Amen. So they (and we) were not to be sidetracked or distracted by the temporal trinkets of this passing world.

**THOUGHT** - A good way for a bondservant of Yeshua to begin each day is with a voluntary, joyful presentation and surrender of ourselves, without hesitation or reservation. Or as Paul said "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable (PLEASING) to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And **do not be conformed (present imperative with a negative)** see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) to this (FALLEN, GODLESS, PASSING) world, but **be** (continually, being - divine passive) **transformed (present imperative)** see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) by the renewing of your mind, so that (PURPOSE) you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Ro 12:1-2+)

Here Paul does not mean physical slavery but spiritual slavery. He is speaking of becoming slaves of the ways of men, the ways of the world, the ways of the flesh. That is the slavery into which many of the Corinthian believers had fallen, the slavery that caused their divisions and strife and their immaturity and immorality. We have been bought with the inestimable price of the "precious blood,

as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19). We have been bought by Jesus and we belong to Jesus. We must never become the moral and spiritual slaves of men, living by their standards and seeking to please them. Enabled by the Holy Spirit, daily make a holy surrender and a holy choice to walk as the slave of the Savior and not as a slave to the corrupt values, ungodly mores, and seductive spiritual perspectives of sinful men.

If one feels that their well-being depends upon the favor of men, and that they themselves are therefore at the mercy of men. And this is the essence of bondage.

Although Paul is referring more likely to "spiritual" slavery it should be noted that some interpreters view it as Paul's continuing admonition about not altering one's social/ interpersonal status. Accordingly, he would be prohibiting one's sale of oneself into legal slavery, for whatever reason.

It is interesting to note that ransom money was paid for freeing certain slaves and Paul alludes to the cost of Christ's procuring their freedom. He commands freemen not to become slaves of men. While it may seem extraordinary, in the first century, Greek freeborn men did sell themselves into the household of Roman citizens, often holding the lucrative post of steward of a household. They could invest their owner's funds and run his business, legitimately accruing wealth. It was possible for them to buy their own way out of their voluntary slavery, and thereby gain Roman citizenship as freedmen, and for their offspring to secure Roman citizenship as freeborn children. It was not only wealth that counted in the Roman empire, especially in a Roman colony such as Corinth, but calling i.e. class or status. How significant is it then that what counts in the Kingdom of God is one's calling, called out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Thank You Jesus. Amen.

**Spurgeon** - "Do not follow even good men slavishly. Do not say, 'I am of Paul; I am of Apollos; I am of Calvin; I am of Wesley.' Did Calvin redeem you? Did Wesley die for you? Who is Calvin and who is Wesley but ministers by whom ye believed as the Lord gave unto you? Do not so surrender yourself to any leadership that you rather follow the man than his Master. I will follow anybody if he goes Christ's way, but I will follow nobody, by the grace of God, if he does not go in that direction."

**Vincent on do not become slaves of men** - Not referring to the outward condition of bondage, but to spiritual subjection to the will and guidance of men as contrasted with Christ.

**MacArthur:** Here Paul does not mean physical slavery but spiritual slavery. He is speaking of becoming slaves of the ways of men, the ways of the world, the ways of the flesh. That is the slavery into which many of the Corinthian believers had fallen, the slavery that caused their divisions and strife and their immaturity and immorality. . . God allows us to be where we are and to stay where we are for a purpose. Conversion is not the signal for a person to leave his social condition, his marriage or his singleness, his human master, or his other circumstances. We are to leave sin and anything that encourages sin; but otherwise we are to stay where we are until God moves us.

**Steve Zeisler:** "Do not become slaves of men," is Paul's powerful word of advice. This is what happens--you become a slave--when you give to somebody the power to make you happy or unhappy. If fulfillment for you comes only when your boss promotes you, then you have become a slave of men. If you set your sights on marriage to a particular person, and if that determines your fulfillment or lack of it, you have become a slave of men.

**Guzik** - This is true not only in regard to literal slavery, but spiritually also. We are never to put ourselves under the inappropriate control or influence of others.

**Peter** describes the "**price**" writing "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.." (1 Peter 1:18-19+)

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What does it mean that "you were bought with a price" \(1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23\)?](#)

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#### **Martin Luther - BOUGHT AT A PRICE**

You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 1 Corinthians 7:23

Here Paul forbids us to become slaves. No doubt he says this as a general guideline against people who try to destroy the freedom and equality of belief and clamp down too tightly on consciences. For example, if someone teaches that a Christian man absolutely cannot marry a non-Christian woman or stay married to her, as some churches teach, then that person hinders the freedom taught here by Paul. That person actually steers people to be more obedient to him than to God's Word, which Paul says is serving human

beings. The people following this teacher think they are God's slaves and serving him when in fact they are serving human teaching and becoming slaves of others. This is also true of those who preached that Christians must be circumcised, nullifying Christian freedom as a result.

So in every way, Paul is concerned about Christian freedom and guards it against the chains and prison of human rules. Paul verifies this when he says, "You were bought at a price." Paul means that Christ bought us with his own blood and set us free from all sins and laws, as it says in Galatians 5:1.

The freedom Christ purchased, however, isn't what the world means by freedom. It doesn't affect the roles people have with one another, such as a servant with a master or a wife with a husband. God doesn't want these roles to be changed. Instead, he wants them to be honored. He changes us inwardly and spiritually. Before God, no law binds us or holds us captive. We are truly free in all things. Before, we were caught in our sins, but now all of our sins are gone. So whatever outward roles or relationships still exist, they have nothing to do with sin or merit before God.

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### **John Bennett - 1 Corinthians 7:23–24 BE NOT YE THE SERVANTS OF MEN**

Masters who purchased slaves in the market before slavery was abolished, would no doubt have paid handsomely for those who they believed would serve them well. Here the Lord reminds believers that they have been 'bought with a price', v. 23, a price far above any paid by a mere earthly master. This, in itself, should be sufficient incentive to the believer, whatever his or her circumstances, to serve God and put His commands first in all things.

The Lord is proprietor, and absolute obedience is enjoined. Of necessity, we have to give to earthly masters due respect and duty, but any service rendered faithfully down here is ultimately for the Lord; 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart', Eph. 6:5–6.

'Be not ye the servants of men', taken in its widest context, will involve putting the Lord and His commands above that of men and especially where men's commands run counter to the word of God. When told not to speak in the name of Christ, Peter and John said, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye', Acts 4:19.

The highest standard is set by all this, in that whatever our calling, our service should be as unto the Lord. The believer should never be guilty of slacking when the management is not present, but they should remember that the Lord is present at all times and marks loyal and faithful service.

Service towards men seeks to impress with the 'big deal', but service to God does not need to distinguish the small from the large service, but leaves it with Him to assess. Service to men seeks external rewards, but service to God rests in the contentment that there is a day of spiritual reward to come. Service to men is temporary, but service unto God is to be rewarded in eternity. We need to remember the words of King Hezekiah: 'My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him', 2 Chron. 29:11. (Day by Day Bible Commands)

### **Alan Redpath - HAPPY, THOUGH UNMARRIED 1 CORINTHIANS 7:23–40**

Some very delicate and difficult problems had been submitted to Paul for his decision and judgment by the church at Corinth. Among them was the whole subject of marriage from the Christian standpoint. Several related questions were treated in the earlier part of this seventh chapter, and now we come to the problems of those who are not married. Paul looks at this from two different aspects: First, those who are daughters of Christian parents, and then those who have lost a partner and are left in a state of widowhood.

The apostle puts a boundary line around what he has to say about this topic: "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord" (7:25). We can search the four Gospels thoroughly without finding any teaching from the Lord Jesus concerning the unmarried state except, of course, by implication.

"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment." Will you please notice that Paul does not say "as long as the man liveth?" He may have died as a husband, although the man is still alive, when he has been unfaithful in the marriage relationship and leaves his partner. If the marriage is broken by the tragedy of adultery, then the one who is left is entitled to Christian marriage. Our Lord taught that perfectly clearly in Matthew 19. Paul concludes the above advice by saying, "I think also that I have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 7:39–40).

I want to underline something very significant: here Paul distinguishes carefully between "thus saith the Lord," and that which comes by the exercise of his own judgment. However, that qualification does not render what he has to say any less authoritative. He speaks "as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (1 Cor 7:25). He gives his judgment from a mind that has been

enlightened by the Holy Spirit and taught from the Word of God.

In both instances, in the case of the virgin (the unmarried daughter), and of the widow or the widower bereft of a life-partner, he comes to the same conclusion: "He that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better" (1 Cor 7:38). "She is happier if she so abide, after my judgment" (1 Cor 7:40).

That is quite startling, especially in these days when apparently the unmarried condition is to be avoided at any cost. Some people most unadvisedly put some kind of slight upon those who are single. How could a man speaking under the direction of the Spirit of God come to the conclusion that under certain circumstances it would be better to remain single? That is our question: how to be happy, through unmarried.

As I studied this chapter, it seemed to me that Paul presents a plan to be adopted: "Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife" (1 Cor 7:27). Two words that stand out here are these: "seek not." For instance, consider how dangerous it would be to fall in love with someone whose idea of loyalty to Christ is certainly not the same as your own. Here is the carefully conceived plan of a man who knows how to maintain the situation under the control of the Spirit of God: Paul says, "seek not a wife."

That stands in refreshing contrast to the frenzied search for a life-partner which is conducted by many people today. When one witnesses the frantic efforts made by some to find a mate, one can only trust that the person who is victim of such an assault has retained enough emotional stability to be able to conduct a strategic withdrawal immediately, before he or she becomes deeply involved in the situation. Much wreckage has been caused by the tactics of a person who seeks a life-partner at any price.

Paul has already given us this principle when he says, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (6:12). Here is a man who is really living in victory; he has control over himself by the power of the Spirit of God. In some instances, as in the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh verses of this chapter, he recognizes that marriage may be necessary: "Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well." Marriage is perfectly lawful; marriage, in some instances, may be necessary; but, Paul says, that is not the issue.

He is able to disassociate himself from the situation and keep a cool head: the real point is, "Is it expedient?" Is it right for the individual in the light of what Paul describes as "the present distress" (1 Cor 7:26)? Now I take that statement to mean not simply the local conditions that existed in Corinth; I rather think Paul meant the tremendous pressures that were being brought to bear upon this little group of believers by the spiritual forces of wickedness. If that was true then, certainly it is equally true today.

Here is the plan that a fellow or a girl who is unmarried should adopt: seek not. You do not come for training at a Bible Institute or a Seminary in order to find a wife or a husband. You do not live in order that somehow or other, at any price, you may be married. You must ask yourself if this is something that is going to be expedient in the light of the pressures that are going to come, and in the light of what you believe to be God's will for your life. Know what it means to stand in control of your affections and emotions. This is no easy thing; it requires intense spiritual discipline. If it is difficult, you may ask, why should this plan be adopted?

Paul goes on to show us that there is a purpose to be achieved: "I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (1 Cor 7:32-33).

"I would have you without carefulness. . . ." He says, "that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction" (1 Cor 7:32, 35b). Here are two great purposes to be achieved in a man's life. They are possible whether you are married or unmarried, but, in Paul's judgment, easier to achieve if you are single. If a man or a woman enters into the relationship of matrimony, this may result in the interests of each other crowding out the interests of the Lord.

I have known a man called to the mission field, for instance, who married a girl with no call, and years afterward have seen him sinking into the quicksands of life. The blessing of God has departed long since; he had missed God's best. I have seen a girl, too, dedicated to the Lord, but afraid of going through life alone. She entered into matrimony out of God's will, and it was not very long before her home and family and immediate circumstances crowded out loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't tell me such a person is happy! He has to look back upon the day he made a choice from which there is no escape, and knows he is living in God's second best. By involving himself in a relationship out of the will of God, he has become full of carefulness; his interests are in the things of the world and not in the things of the Lord.

However, that need not always be the case. There is no question, obviously, but that marriage in the Lord can be a tremendous blessing, a great and wonderful experience. "But and if thou marry," says Paul, "thou hast not sinned" (7:28). There is no necessity for marriage to put the Lord Jesus in second place. But if it is marriage out of God's will, and it is going to lead to distracting care,

then it is better, as Paul says, to remain single.

“Without carefulness . . . without distraction.” I would lovingly put those two words into the thinking and conscience of those who are single. There is a tremendous potential of blessing in serving the Lord with freedom and concentration. In any event, Paul says, if you are going to marry, you are going to have trouble (1 Cor 7:28). No matter how saintly people are and how far they are on together in the Christian life, when they begin to live together, problems are bound to come. It is not on the great sorrows or trials that marriage flounders, but rather upon the irritations of everyday difficulties: a crying child, a late breakfast, a short temper, an unsympathetic mother-in-law — this kind of thing can cause a marriage to become shaky, unless right at the very heart of it is the Lord Jesus Himself.

As we think about attending upon the Lord “without carefulness,” our minds go immediately to that familiar story where the Lord Jesus spoke to two sisters and said to one of them, “Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things,” and to the other, “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41–42+).

It is possible, both in the married and in the unmarried state to live without carefulness and without distraction. It is that which makes married life so wonderful and the unmarried state so full of potential blessing.

One other thing I would get out of this passage, perhaps the most important of all: there is a principle to be accepted. You will notice how Paul brings in eternity here: “This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away” (1 Cor 7:29–31).

As Paul gives his judgment on this question of being married or unmarried, he shows us the principle upon which a man or woman may make their decision: the times are troubled; the Lord is coming soon; the opportunity for service is brief. Life is short, at best, and it can end quickly and unexpectedly. Therefore these relationships of life should be treated as though they did not exist, in the light of the urgency of these days. He speaks of marriage, of sorrow and joy, of business life, of the world itself, how to use it and how not to use it. Because of the pressures upon us and the spiritual evil confronting us, these things must take second place — almost be regarded as non-existent.

Now Paul is not implying that we should be callous or unkind; that would be totally contrary to all the teaching of the New Testament concerning our relationship with one another. But he does bring the reality of eternity right into everyday life, so that we may live in the ordinary realm with the recognized presence of the Lord Jesus and in the light of heaven.

What does that involve? It means that on the questions of being married, everything is to be governed by our relationship to the Lord Himself. For those who are married, there will often be times when the comfort of the home and joy of each other’s presence has to be denied, has to take second place for the sake of the Lord, His work and His service.

Sometimes sorrow threatens to take us away from our duty, our loyalty to the King of kings, our service for the Lord. It must not be allowed to do that; if in the time of heartbreak and sorrow we are tempted to give in, these things have to be regarded as though they did not exist. We must press on in the love of God and for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes thrilling circumstances make us full of happiness, but if joy conflicts with our duty to the Master, then it has to be swept to one side. Nothing must be allowed to make us neglect or delay, or to be anything less than our best in His service. If business threatens to interfere with the Christian life, says the apostle, you cannot help going on buying — but be sure that you hold the things you buy very loosely, and that your interest and affections are not centered on them, but on the things of God.

The principle to be observed, as you seek to apply these things to your own life and come to a decision on important matters, is in the two words we have considered already: “seek not,” linked with another command of the Lord Jesus: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

In other words, if in your life you put God first, and His call, even if it seems at the moment it would tear your heart in pieces, if it means denying some human love, turning your back upon some fascinating possibility, then everything that is in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God for you will be added to you.

If only people today, young and old alike, facing these tremendously intimate and personal problems, would follow that principle, seeking first His Kingdom, how wonderful it would be to watch how the Lord, as He is put first, frequently brings into their lives the partner of His choice. He gives to them the persons He has waiting for them as He sees that they are determined above everything else to serve Him without carefulness and without distraction.

Finally, a word of loving concern and warning. You have seen what the apostle has to say concerning this situation of marriage or singleness, and I have sought to show you that all this should lie within the sphere of the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. My word of

warning is this: to step into any relationship outside the government of the Lord, that is to say, outside His permissive will, is not only to involve yourself in tragedy, but perhaps to bring sorrow into the lives of a generation yet to be born. For a person who enters into marriage out of the will of God and brings children into the world may cause their whole lives to know the blight of unhappiness and misery, because their parents were married out of the will of God.

What a tremendous thing it is to be able, by the grace of God and by the power of His Spirit, to do what Paul did, to stand in victory, in control of his emotions, making the decision he knows to be God's will, that which is expedient in the light of all the pressures upon him. Then whether you are to go through life single or married, you are going to live without carefulness and attend upon the Lord without distraction. May that be your happy portion and mine until our Lord Jesus comes!

### 1 Corinthians 7:24 Brethren, each one is to **remain** with God in that *condition* in which he was called.

Amplified So, brethren, in whatever station or state or condition of life each one was when he was called, there let him continue with and close to God.

Wuest Each one in the sphere in which he was divinely summoned, brethren, in this let him be remaining in the presence of God. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:24 In whatever situation someone was called, brothers and sisters, let him remain in it with God.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:24 Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, should remain as you were when God first called you.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:24 καστος ν κλθη, δελφο, ν το τ μεν τω παρ θε .

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:24 each, in that in which he was called, brethren, in this let him remain with God.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:24 Brethren, let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:24 Brothers, each person should remain with God in whatever situation he was called.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:24 In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:24 Brothers, everyone should continue before God in the state in which he was called.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:24 Each one of you, brothers, is to stay before God in the state in which you were called.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:24 Brothers and sisters, you should remain in whatever circumstances you were in when God called you. God is with you in those circumstances.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:24 My brothers, let every man keep in that condition which is the purpose of God for him.

- **each one:** 1Co 7:17,20
- **remain:** 1Co 10:31 Ge 5:22-24 17:1 1Sa 14:45 Col 3:23,24
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### STAY PUT!

Brethren ([adelphos](#)), each one ([hekastos](#)) is to **remain** ([meno](#)) with God in that *condition* in which he was called ([kaleo](#)) - **Remain** is in the [present imperative](#) a command for this to be their continual practice. Paul basically repeats 1 Cor 7:17 and 1 Cor 7:20 to emphasize that the believers are to continue in the same status of marriage (or not), circumcision (or not) and as slaves (or not).

**Steve Zeisler:** The general principle which Paul is seeking to apply is this: people do not have to change their circumstances in order to be happy. It is not due to a mistake that you find yourself in your present circumstances. God knows your situation, and he is



not calling upon you to change your circumstances in order to bless you. Fulfillment in life, freedom in Christ, personal integration, growth and confidence do not depend on whether you are married or not. It doesn't matter whether we have the right job, whether we're making enough money, whether we have the right friends or not.

**Stephen Armstrong** - We remain "with God" when we remain in the condition in which we were as He called us. Paul doesn't mean we can't ever change the place we live or the occupation we have, etc. He means our salvation doesn't – by itself – demand that we spend our entire life to serve God. We can serve Him right where we are ◦ We have this confidence because we know that all the important issues of our sin and our salvation have been already settled on the cross. .

**ILLUSTRATION** - A wealthy man moved into a small community and decided to go to the local barber shop for a shave. He walked into the barber shop to find that the local barber was a woman, named Grace. Grace gave the man a shave, and he asked her, "How much do I owe you?" She said "\$25." The man thought that was somewhat expensive and that he may have to get a shave every other day. Nonetheless, he paid Grace and went on his way. The next day, he woke up and found his face to be just as smooth as the day before. No need for a shave today, he thought, well, it was a \$25 shave. The next day he awoke to find his face as smooth as the day before. Wow! he thought. That's amazing, as he normally would need to shave daily to keep his clean-shaven business look. Day 3, he woke up and his face was still as smooth as the minute after Grace had finished. Now, somewhat perplexed, the man went down to the barber shop to ask some questions. On this particular day he found the town pastor sitting in the barber shop waiting for a haircut, so the wealthy man struck up a conversation with the pastor asking if the pastor knew how it was that his face could remain so smooth for so long after he was shaved. The kind old pastor gently explained, "Friend, you were shaved by Grace... and once shaved, always shaved."

The permanence of our faith and salvation underlies everything Paul is teaching in this chapter. We can have confidence to remain in our present condition for as long as God requires because our condition has no impact on our salvation

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### **Martin Luther - CONTENT IN YOUR CALLING**

Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to. 1 Corinthians 7:24

Everyone has a calling in life. Believers serve God when they wholeheartedly take care of these responsibilities. An official who governs well serves God. A mother who cares for her children, a father who goes to work, and a student who studies diligently are all servants of God.

Many overlook this God-pleasing lifestyle because they consider simple, day-to-day work insignificant. They look instead for other work that seems more difficult and end up becoming disobedient to God.

Doing what God requires is a sign of superior wisdom. God requires that believers work hard at their callings without worrying about what anyone else is doing. Yet few people do this. A poet who reflected on what people are like once said, "The farmer would like to be a shopkeeper, and the shopkeeper a farmer." As the saying goes, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence."

Few people are satisfied with their lives. The person in the pew wants to be a member of the clergy. The student wishes to be the teacher. The citizen wants to be mayor. Few people are content with their callings. However, there is no other way to serve God except simply living by faith, sticking to your calling, and maintaining a clear conscience.

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### **Stephen Olford - -- 1 Corinthians 7:24**

Here is a message to my own heart: find contentment in the things I have and the ministry to which He has called me.

This requires patience. For very often, my calling requires waiting periods. O, to know the truth of the words, "They also serve who only stand and wait."<sup>14</sup>

This calling also requires consistency. It is so easy to be spasmodic in Christian service, especially when circumstances lend themselves to extra efforts. But to be consistent and patient necessitates God. Hence, the apostle says, "Remain with God" (v. 24). "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

No wonder Moses said, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here" (Ex. 33:15).

Teach me, Lord, to be content with such things as I have,  
and in the vocation wherewith I am called.

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**1 Corinthians 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.**

Amplified Now concerning the virgins (the marriageable maidens) I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion and advice as one who by the Lord's mercy is rendered trustworthy and faithful.

Wuest Now, concerning the virgins [unmarried women], an injunction from the Lord I do not possess. But I am giving my reasoned judgment as one who is trustworthy by reason of the mercy shown him by the Lord. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:25 With regard to the question about people who have never married, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one shown mercy by the Lord to be trustworthy.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now regarding your question about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in his mercy has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:25 Περὶ δὲ τῶν παρθένων πῶς ἔσονται κύριος οὐκ ἔχω, γινώσκω μὲν δὲ ὅτι ὁ κύριος ἐλεημένος ἐστὶν ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου πιστός ἐστιν.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:25 And concerning the virgins, a command of the Lord I have not; and I give judgment as having obtained kindness from the Lord to be faithful:

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:25 About virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I do give an opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now in regard to virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:25 About people remaining virgin, I have no directions from the Lord, but I give my own opinion as a person who has been granted the Lord's mercy to be faithful.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:25 Concerning virgins: Even though I don't have any command from the Lord, I'll give you my opinion. I'm a person to whom the Lord has shown mercy, so I can be trusted.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:25 Now about virgins I have no orders from the Lord: but I give my opinion as one to whom the Lord has given mercy to be true to him.

- **concerning:** 1Co 7:28,34,36-38 Ps 78:63
- **have:** 1Co 7:6,10,12,40 2Co 8:8-10 11:17
- **obtained:** 1Co 4:2 15:10 2Co 2:17 4:1,2 1Ti 1:12-16
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Matthew 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.”

## CONCERNING VIRGINS

**Paul Apple** gives the context for this last section (1 Cor 7:25-40) - We must understand that Paul was asked a specific question or was addressing particular circumstances that faced the believers of his day in Corinth. He starts out with his focus on the virgins, but then expands his answer since most of the same principles would apply to any unmarried parties - those who had been divorced, widows, etc. Paul had been answering questions regarding sexual relations in marriage, regarding whether singleness or marriage was appropriate for different groups, and whether conversion requires a change in one's outward physical circumstances. He now leaves the more general discussion of overall contentment to finish with his discussion of the single state vs. marriage.

**Virgins** is a **key word** in this last section for there are 6 uses out of a total of 14 NT uses occur - 1 Co. 7:25, 28, 34, 36, 37, 38

**Now concerning** (same phrase 1 Cor 7:1 1 Cor 7:25 1 Cor 8:1 1 Cor 12:1 1 Cor 16:1) - "The Corinthians had written a letter to the Apostle Paul asking him to answer various questions on marriage. One must have been about celibacy—is it right and biblical to stay single? Is singlehood morally superior to the marriage state? Is a person a second class citizen if he or she is single? The Corinthian church had a particular false teaching in their midst. There were some who taught singlehood was a superior moral state to marriage and that a person was more spiritual if he or she decided to stay celibate. The Apostle Paul does not deprecate the single state, in fact, he exalts it. He concludes that celibacy is desirable but not demanded. Marriage is good but celibacy is better under certain circumstances if a person has the gift of celibacy." (Arnold)

**Virgins I have no command** ([epitage](#)) **of the Lord** ([kurios](#)), **but I give an opinion** ([gnome](#)) **as one who by the mercy** ([eleeo](#)) **of the Lord** ([kurios](#)) **is trustworthy** ([pistos](#)) - While He gave no direct teaching, Jesus does allude indirectly to this in Mt 19:12. The NET has "With regard to the question about people who have never married." In saying **have no command of the Lord**, Paul is not saying this is not inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Pe 1:21+) but only that he had not received a specific **command** from his **Lord**.

The **ESV** translation renders [parthenos](#) "Now concerning the betrothed" and then in the **ESV Study Bible** explains **betrothed** translates the Greek word for **virgins** (plural of [parthenos](#)). Although the term could apply to either men or women, it most often applied to women of marriageable age who had never married. Paul's use of the term in 1 Cor 7:28 is clearly feminine, so he probably has women in mind here as well. In light of what he says later in 1 Cor 7:36–38, it seems clear that his comments in 1 Cor 7:25–26 are directed to any man who has promised to marry a "virgin."

**Arnold** - This is primarily a reference to young unmarried women who had never known a man sexually. Perhaps a better translation would be **"maidens."** It appears the Corinthians asked Paul about the relationship of maidens to marriage, but Paul applied the truth to both young unmarried men and women. There is no double standard in God's will for unmarried men and women. He expects both to be virgins. The saying, "Boys must sow their wild oats, and girls must be proper" is straight from the pit. God's standard is sexual purity for both men and women before marriage. **But I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.** While on earth, the Lord Jesus said very little on the single state, so Paul gives his opinion on this matter. It is a sanctified opinion because Paul wrote as an Apostle (1 Cor 1:1) being led along by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle was **"trustworthy"** and in 1 Corinthians 7:40+ he says, **"I too have the Spirit of God"** What Paul had to say was just as inspired as what Jesus had to say and as authoritative.

**Utley on I give an opinion** - Some have tried to use Paul's statement in vv. 6 and 25 to lower his authority as an Apostle or make this a disclaimer of inspiration. It is neither. This is an idiomatic way of admitting that he does not know whether Jesus ever addressed this issue specifically. Verses 25 and 40 show that Paul felt his apostleship and call gave him the authority to address issues that arose in the life of the early Gentile church.

**NET NOTE on never married** - Greek **"virgins."** There are **three main views as to which group of people** is referred to by the word **parthenos** here, and the stance taken here directly impacts one's understanding of 1 Cor 7:36–38 (See [NET NOTE there](#)).

(1) The term could refer to virgin women who were not married. The central issue would then be whether or not their fathers should give them in marriage to eligible men. (This is the view which has been widely held throughout the history of the Church.)

(2) A minority understand the term to refer to men and women who are married but who have chosen to live together without sexual relations. This position might have been possible in the Corinthian church, but there is no solid evidence to support it.

(3) The view adopted by many modern commentators (see, e.g., Fee, Conzelmann, Barrett) is that the term refers to young, engaged women (**ED**: NOTE ESV TRANSLATES IT "BETROTHED.") who were under the

influence of various groups within the Corinthian church not to go through with their marriages. The central issue would then be whether the young men and women should continue with their plans and finalize their marriages. For further discussion, see G. D. Fee, *First Corinthians* (NICNT), 325–28.

**Stephen Armstrong** - As he did earlier in the letter, Paul qualifies his instructions, but unlike the earlier qualification, this time he makes clear there is no mandate here ◦ He says this instruction is not something Jesus Himself gave. But even more, Paul says he is giving an opinion. Paul is saying that the Christian is not bound by this counsel as if it were a command. Nevertheless, it is scripture, so it is wise and trustworthy counsel ◦ That counsel is that Christians should not seek to change their marital status in view of the present distress. If you are unmarried, then it may be best to remain that way. If you are married already, then certainly do not violate your marriage vows by ending the marriage. In other words, remain as you are. Do not become distracted by such things as marriage when more important, eternal concerns present themselves.

**Henry Morris** - There had been no previous commandment specifically concerning virgins, except to refrain from fornication, so Paul gives his own inspired judgment (1 Corinthians 7:40). Before giving his advice concerning virgins, however, he points out that the imminent "distress" (1 Corinthians 7:26,29)--possibly referring to the soon-coming severe persecutions of Christians by the Romans (**ED: THE EVIL EMPEROR NERO WAS ON THE SCENE! FIRST CORINTHIANS WAS WRITTEN 55 AD AND NERO RULED FROM 54-68 AD AND AFTER THE GREAT FIRE IN ROME IN 64 AD BEGAN AN INTENSE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS**)--would indicate that it might be better to remain unmarried, even though getting married was certainly no sin (1 Corinthians 7:28). (Defender's Study Bible)

**Virgins** (3933) **parthenos** generally is used of a female who is beyond puberty but not married and still a virgin. In 2 Cor 11:2 parthenos is used figuratively of the church, the bride pledged to Christ.. Some contexts do not focus on the meaning virginity. The clear sense of **parthenos** in Mt 1:23+ quoted from Isa 7:14+ (Lxx uses parthenos for Heb - 'almah - see below) is of a woman who has not been intimate with a man (cp Lk 1:27+). Paul uses parthenos in First Corinthians to refer to a woman of marriageable age. In Mt 25:1, 7, 11 parthenos refers to young women of marriageable age. **J D Watson** writes that "Even in all their excesses, the ancient Greeks highly valued virginity. It was, in fact, a characteristic of many of the goddesses of pagan religions. The chief examples were the Greek goddesses Artemis (Diana among the Romans) and Athene (Roman, Minerva) (Ed: cp [Athena Parthenos](#)). Athene's temple in Athens was actually named the Parthenon (see [etymology](#))."

**Parthenos** - 15x in 14v - Matt. 1:23; Matt. 25:1; Matt. 25:7; Matt. 25:11; Lk. 1:27; Acts 21:9; 1 Co. 7:25; 1 Co. 7:28; 1 Co. 7:34; 1 Co. 7:36; 1 Co. 7:37; 1 Co. 7:38; 2 Co. 11:2; Rev. 14:4

**Zodhiates - Who Are the Virgins of Whom Paul Speaks? To whom does Paul refer when he speaks of the maidens or the virgins?** The Greek word is **parthénos** which can be either masculine or feminine. It is derived from paratheínai, "to lay out or set apart," and so alluded to the secluded life of virgins in Eastern countries and among the ancient Greeks. Two Hebrew words are translated "virgin" in the King James Version—**bethûlâh** and **'almâh**. The first of these comes from a root word meaning "to separate," and is the common word for a woman who has never had sexual intercourse and is truly the equivalent to the Greek parthénos. Therefore, the two Hebrew names for a virgin (to one or the other of which parthénos in the Septuagint most commonly answers) refer to their secluded, concealed mode of living. The Greek word **parthénos** in the New Testament means "a virgin, a maiden, a maid," as in Matthew 1:23, Acts 21:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:28. The word is used in reference to sexual morality, chastity, the fact that a girl has never known a man. It is spoken of the Church of Corinth, expressing Paul's desire to present her to Christ as pure from corrupt doctrines and practices as in 1 Corinthians 11:2. It is applied to believers in general, whether they be men or women, married or single, as unpolluted by idolatrous abominations as in Revelation 14:4. While technically it could refer to both men and women in 1 Corinthians 7:25. However, the general context of verses 28-34 and the fact that the word is used exclusively with the feminine definite article *hē*, to denote a female virgin, we must conclude that indisputably the word here is **virgin maidens**, referring only to women who are chaste and who have never known a man. This word must be distinguished from **agamos**, "unmarried ones," used in 1 Cor 7:8, 32 to refer to men or women who, though they are not presently married, might have been married sometime before. When Paul wanted to refer distinctly to a virgin who was unmarried, as in 1 Cor 7:34, he said: "There is difference also between a wife (*gunē*) and a virgin (*hē parthénos*, 'the female virgin')." Then he said, "the unmarried one," and that "one" is translated as the "unmarried woman" because the feminine article *hē* appears before *agámos*.

**Command** (2003) **epitage** from **epitáссо** = appoint over, put in charge in turn from **epí** = upon or over + **tasso** = arrange, appoint, order, set in place) means literally one appointed over and came to refer to something that is in its proper order or

place. Figuratively **epitage** was used of an authoritative directive, an order, an official command, a directive or an injunction. All 7 uses in NT - Ro6:26; 1 Co. 7:6; 1 Co. 7:25; 2 Co. 8:8; 1 Ti 1:1; Titus 1:3; Titus 2:15

**Opinion** (judgment)(1106) **gnome** refers basically, the mind as the instrument of knowing. Nuances = 1. purpose, intention, mind 1 Cor 1:10; Rev 17:13; decision, resolve Acts 20:3; Rev 17:17.—2. opinion, judgment 1 Cor 7:25, 40; 2 Cor 8:10; Acts 4:18 v.l.—3. previous knowledge, consent Philemon 14. [English **gnomic**] **Gilbrant** - Versatility characterizes **gnōmē** in the classical writings. Its definition ranges in meaning from a “means of knowing” (intelligence) to a “purpose, decision, resolution.” Within this spectrum it could denote a “judgment” or “disposition,” or an “opinion” or “consent”

**By the mercy** (perfect tense - past completed act and now a state)(1653) **eleeo** from **eleos** means “to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially such sympathy which manifests itself in action, less frequently in word.” Describes the general sense of one who has compassion or person on someone in need. It indicates being moved to pity and compassion by tragedy and includes the fear that this could happen to me. To see someone in dire need (including one who may not deserve the misfortune), to have compassion on them, and to give help to remove the need. Only other use in the Corinthians letters - 2 Cor 4:1.

**Trustworthy** (4103) **pistos** from **peitho** = to persuade - induce one by words to believe, have confidence) is something or someone who is worthy of faith or keeps promises and is applied to God, humans, His Word, etc **Pistos** means dependable (worthy of reliance or trust), trustworthy, steadfast, unswerving. Used of one who shows Himself faithful in the discharge of a duty or the administration of a trust (Mt 24:45).

**Pistos** in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 1:9; 1 Co. 4:2; 1 Co. 4:17; 1 Co. 7:25; 1 Co. 10:13; 2 Co. 1:18; 2 Co. 6:15;

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## 1 Corinthians 7:25–40 Today in the Word

The movie, *The Bucket List*, is the story of the unlikely friendship between two men, one a corporate executive, the other an auto mechanic. They’ve landed in the same hospital room, and both are facing unwelcome diagnoses and their own mortality. But courageously and humorously, they set off together on the adventure of doing what they had both always meant to do before “kicking the bucket.” Every dream and ambition mattered now that time was short.

Paul writes with a similar kind of urgency in the second half of 1 Corinthians 7. In verse 26, he refers to “the present crisis.” In verse 29, he emphasizes, “The time is short;” and in verse 31, he concludes, “This world in its present form is passing away.” Sooner rather than later, he expects Jesus’ visible, bodily return to earth, and time is running out to tell the world about the good news. He passionately wants the church to be on a mission in the last days.

Because Paul anticipated Jesus’ imminent return, he encourages unmarried believers in the Corinthian church not to marry. As he answers their questions from the previous letter (this time about those single or betrothed but not yet married), he does so with the sole aim of securing their “undivided devotion to the Lord.” He is not, as some have argued, against marriage. He does not promote celibacy as the most spiritual of choices. But he does teach that an unmarried person is free from the distractions of a married person and more able to concern himself with the things of God.

From our vantage point, we now know what Paul did not: that Jesus would not return in his generation. That doesn’t mean, however, that the Scriptures are somehow in error. Paul even tempers the tone of this discussion with disclaimers like, “I think that it is good,” and “In my judgment.” He has reasoned that if one can choose freely not to marry, exercising self-control in the area of sexual purity, this is best. However, no one sins by choosing to marry (v. 28).

### Apply the Word

The church can be a very difficult place for singles. They see the ideal of marriage and family promoted (as it should be), but they often feel exempt from the blessings of God. The church needs the biblical understanding provided by today’s passage. Singleness is also a gift from God! If we’re married, we should be satisfied in our situation and seek to glorify God through our marriage. And if we’re single, we can embrace the freedom and flexibility we have to serve God.

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## Larry Richards - Undivided Devotion (1 Cor. 7:25–40)

“June! Can you come over tonight? We’ve just met the nicest young man!” Ever notice the matchmaking that goes on in a church? Or how we pressure people to marry? A single person starts coming to church, and within a month everyone’s busy trying to arrange a meeting with this or that prospect. It’s the same with widows and widowers. “Would you like to come over this evening. We’ve met the nicest woman, and she’s just your age!”

Well, it’s not fair. Especially to those with a gift that Paul values highly: the gift of celibacy. We can make it really hard for men and women who, for their own reasons, choose not to marry. Instead of respecting their choice, we assume that there must be something

wrong with them—and we mount campaigns to correct it!

Paul made it clear that virgins and widows are free to marry if they wish. But he wanted us to give brothers and sisters the freedom not to marry if they wish—and not to be harassed about their choice.

It may help us back off if we consider Paul's reasons. He said (and every married person knows it's true) that "those who marry will face many troubles in this life" (v. 28). The married become responsible for spouse and children, and thus have a powerful motive to be "engrossed in" the things of the world (v. 31). After all, we've got to provide a house to live in. And with the costs of a college education these days, we need to work harder and save more money than ever before!

Now, it's right to be concerned with "pleasing" our spouse. But the responsibilities that come with marriage mean we have less time, less money, and less energy to devote to pleasing God. Our choices are, rightly, shaped by considering the welfare of our families.

The unmarried, however, are free from all such restrictions, able to give "undivided devotion to the Lord." And this, the gift of undivided devotion, is something that God is certainly pleased to receive.

So the next time a single person comes into your fellowship, welcome him or her gladly. And forego the matchmaking. You may have one of those special people who has decided to follow Paul's advice, and live a life of undivided devotion to the Lord.

Personal Application -- Welcome and honor singles in your church family.

Quotable -- "This is self-renunciation—to unlock the chains of this earthly life which passeth away and to set oneself free from the business of men, and thus to make ourselves fitter to enter on that path that leads to God and to free our spirit to gain and use those things which are far more precious than gold or precious stones."—Basil the Great (365 Day Devotional Commentary)

### **1 Corinthians 7:26 I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.**

Amplified I think then, because of the impending distress [that is even now setting in], it is well (expedient, profitable, and wholesome) for a person to remain as he or she is.

Wuest I consider therefore this to be salutary because of the necessity imposed by the present circumstances, that it is good for an individual to be just as he is. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:26 Because of the impending crisis I think it best for you to remain as you are.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:26 Because of the present crisis, I think it is best to remain as you are.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:26 Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:26 Νομίζω οτι το καλον περιειν δι τιν νεστοσαν νεκην, τι καλον νεθροπι τ οτωσ εναι.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:26 I suppose, therefore, this to be good because of the present necessity, that it is good for a man that the matter be thus: --

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:26 I think therefore that this is good by reason of the distress that is upon us, namely, that it is good for a man to be as he is.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:26 Therefore I consider this to be good because of the present distress: It is fine for a man to remain as he is.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:26 I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress-- that it is good for a man to remain as he is:

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:26 I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:26 So this is what I think best because of the present distress: that it is a good thing for a person to remain as he is.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:26 Well then, because of the stress which is weighing upon us, the right thing seems to



be this: it is good for people to stay as they are.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:26 Because of the present crisis I believe it is good for people to remain as they are.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:26 In my opinion then, because of the present trouble, it is good for a man to keep as he is.

- **that:** 1Co 7:1,8,28,35-38 Jer 16:2-4 Mt 24:19 Lu 21:23 23:28,29 1Pe 4:17
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

I think ([nomizo](#) in present tense) **then that this is good** ([kalos](#)) **in view of the present distress** (crisis - [anagke](#)) - **NET** has "impending crisis" **NLT** "present crisis." Clearly it was distress going on at that time in Corinth. This refers to the virgin or unmarried just mentioned. The nature of the distress is not stated. In a overtly pagan culture, conversion of an individual to Christianity would clearly run counter to the flow of the society and create some "distress." (cf Acts 18:12+ and see [note on Nero](#)) What we do know is that the situation and conditions were such that Paul says it would be better to remain single.

#### **APPLICATION:**

In times of crisis, it may not be best to marry.

-- Jack Arnold

**Arnold - Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are.** This literally says, "It is good for a man to remain as he is." The first reason Paul thinks it is better to stay single is because of the **present crisis**, and he deals with this in 1 Cor 7:26-28. Notice he says, "**It is good for a man to remain as he is**," so he is speaking to men as well as women. In this context, Paul is obviously referring to some specific crisis the Corinthians were experiencing.. He is not talking about life in general with it ups and downs but about times of crisis. My personal opinion is that this is referring to persecution, for we know from Acts 18:1-28 the city of Corinth was antagonistic to Christians (See Acts 18:12+). The days in Corinth were hard ones for believers. It was a time of persecution and suffering when one might have to leave home and loved ones at a moment's notice and flee those who hated Christianity. In light of these desperate times, Paul felt it best for men and women to stay unmarried. Single folks are best prepared to handle the pressures of being a Christian in times of crisis.

**David Guzik** - What is the advantage of remaining single? We can easily imagine how in a time of persecution or great crisis, how much more of a burden a wife or a family can be for someone committed to standing strong for the Lord. We may say, "Torture me, and I will never renounce Jesus." But what if we were threatened with the rape of our wife or the torture of our children? These may seem far away to us, but they were not far away to Christians in the first century.

**Think** ([3543](#)) [nomizo](#) from **nomos** = law, custom) to follow or practice what is customary (Acts 16:13), To think, believe, suppose, consider Mt 5:17; 10:34; Lk 2:44; Ac 7:25; 8:20; 16:13, 27; 1 Cor 7:26, 36 It means to think or believe something without being fully settled in mind or opinion. **BDAG** says "to form an idea about something but with some suggestion of tentativeness or refraining from a definitive statement."

**Distress** (hardship) ([318](#)) [anagke](#) from **ana** = up, again, back, renewal, repetition, intensity, reversal + **agkale** = arm when bent) refers to any necessity or compulsion, outer or inner, brought on by a variety of circumstances. It can mean necessity imposed either by external conditions or by the law of duty. The idea of trouble, distress or hardship is dominant in Luke 21:23; 1Co 7:26; 2Co 6:4; 2Co 12:10. This is the predominant sense here in 1 Th 3:7 where anagke refers to difficult circumstances that come on one with compelling force.

**Anagke** - 18v in NT - Matt. 18:7; Lk. 14:18; Lk. 21:23; Lk. 23:17; Rom. 13:5; 1 Co. 7:26; 1 Co. 7:37; 1 Co. 9:16; 2 Co. 6:4; 2 Co. 9:7; 2 Co. 12:10; 1 Thess. 3:7; Phlm. 1:14; Heb. 7:12; Heb. 7:27; Heb. 9:16; Heb. 9:23; Jude 1:3

**That it is good** ([kalos](#)) **for a man to remain as he is - Amplified** = "it is well (expedient, profitable, and wholesome) for a person to remain as he or she is." Although it is translated "man" a number of versions (as Amplified just quoted) translate it as if it could be either a man or a woman (**NIV** = "I think that it is good for you to remain as you are."). In context while virgin is usually referring to a young maiden, there is no question that Paul applied the truth to both young unmarried men and women and that truth was that it was better to remain unmarried. It would be easier to cope with whatever the stress was because the single person would not have to be concerned for their spouse and possibly children. In a word the single state would have less pressure!

**Utley** - The recurrent theme of "stay in the same condition as when you were saved" (1 Cor 7:8, 12–13, 18, 21, 24, 26, 27, 37, 40) is Paul's theological standard in this letter.

Amplified Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

Wuest Have you been bound to a wife? Stop seeking to be loosed. Have you been loosed from a wife? Stop seeking a wife. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:27 The one bound to a wife should not seek divorce. The one released from a wife should not seek marriage.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:27 If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:27 Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:27 ὁ δεσσοι γυναικ , μ ζ τει λ σιν· λ λυσσαι π γυναικ ς, μ ζ τει γυνα κα.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:27 Hast thou been bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed; hast thou been loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek a separation. Are you free of a wife? Then do not look for a wife.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:27 If you are joined to a wife, do not seek to be released; if you are freed of a wife, do not look for a wife.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:27 Do you have a wife? Don't seek a divorce. Are you divorced from your wife? Don't look for another one.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:27 If you are married to a wife, make no attempt to get free from her: if you are free from a wife, do not take a wife.

- **bound:** 1Co 7:12-14,20
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ADVICE TO THOSE MARRIED AND DIVORCED

**Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released** - NLT - "If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage." NET = "The one bound to a wife should not seek divorce." **Bound** is not literally tied but figuratively obligated to one's wife by the covenant of marriage. **Bound** is perfect tense which pictures past completed action (when he said "I do") and continuing state (still married). **Do not seek** is commanded twice in this passage, both times in the form of a [present imperative with a negative](#) indicating that they were to stop an action which was in progress. That is, some of the Corinthians were already pursuing these paths. Paul says "Stop it!" **To be released** is one word in Greek (lusin) found only here in the NT and referring to an action of loosing, setting free or releasing in this context a release from the marriage bond (divorce).

**Arnold** - Under the pressure of a major crisis, it is wise to stay single, but if married, one must do all he can to protect his family.

**Guzik** - Paul echoes the same principle laid down in 1 Corinthians 7:17–24. God can use us right where we are, and we should not be so quick to change our station in life.

**MacArthur** - Marriage is a lifelong bond that can be broken only by death, adultery, or divorce by an unbelieving spouse. Other problems, no matter how severe, are never grounds for divorce.

**Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife** - NLT = "If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married. Do not look for a wife. Under the pressure of a major crisis, it is wise to stay single, but if married, one must do all he can to protect his family.

**MacArthur** - "Cherish your singleness as a blessing from God," Paul is saying. "Take advantage of its many advantages."

**Bound** (1210)(**deo**) means literally to bind, tie, fasten (Mt 12:29, Mt 13:30, Mt 21:2, 22:13, of Jesus = Mt 27:2, of demon possessed man - Mk 5:3, of Jesus' body "bound it in linen wrappings" = 19:40, Paul to bring Christians "bound to Jerusalem" = Acts 9:2, 14+), fasten with chains, to throw into chains (of John the Baptist - Mt 14:3, Barabbas "imprisoned" = Mk 15:7, Acts 24:27, Co 4:3). A woman who was bent together, had been "bound" by Satan through the work of a demon, Luke 13:16 (commentary). To be obliged to do something, as if one were bound with a physical restraint (Acts 20:22 - commentary "bound in spirit" = compelled by his convictions, under the constraining power of the Spirit of God, to go to Jerusalem) **Binding and loosing** - Mt 16:19, ("bind and loose") Mt 18:18 ("whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven") (See [What does the Bible mean by binding and loosing?](#) "the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living" = Ro 7:2+ (be under the authority of), see also 1 Cor 7:39; 1 Cor 7:27. "The word of God is not imprisoned" 2 Ti 2:9+ (its ministry, course and efficacy were not hindered by the bonds and imprisonment suffered by Paul). Of angels (demons) who "are bound at the great river Euphrates." (Rev 9:14+). Of Satan "bound...for 1000 years." (Rev 20:2+)

**Friberg** - (1) bind (together), tie (up) (Mt 13.30), opposite *luo* (loose, untie); (2) of burial procedures wrap up (Jn 19.40); (3) of arrest and imprisonment bind, tie up (Mk 6.17); (4) figuratively, of mutual commitment to the marriage vow be restricted (Ro 7.2); (5) of physical incapacity cause to be ill (Lk 13.16); (6) binding and loosing (*luo*) in Mt 16.19, 18.18 **Louw - Nida** - to cause someone to be under the authority of someone or something else—to restrict, to place under (the jurisdiction of).

**Gilbrant** - The basic meaning of **deō** is "to bind," either in the sense of "to bind together" or "to bind to (something)." These usages were commonly found in both classical Greek and the Septuagint and led naturally to binding as a synonym for "to chain" or "to take prisoner" (e.g., Psalm 149:8). Since there were other Hebrew words for the fastening idea, the Septuagint often uses *deō* to convey imprisonment. Important also is the figurative meaning of being bound to law and duty, e.g., to one's spouse.

**Deo** - 43x in 40v - bind(7), binding(1), binds(2), bound(23), imprisoned(4), prisoners(1), put...in chains(1), tied(4). Matt. 12:29; Matt. 13:30; Matt. 14:3; Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:18; Matt. 21:2; Matt. 22:13; Matt. 27:2; Mk. 3:27; Mk. 5:3; Mk. 5:4; Mk. 6:17; Mk. 11:2; Mk. 11:4; Mk. 15:1; Mk. 15:7; Lk. 13:16; Lk. 19:30; Jn. 11:44; Jn. 18:12; Jn. 18:24; Jn. 19:40; Acts 9:2; Acts 9:14; Acts 9:21; Acts 12:6; Acts 20:22; Acts 21:11; Acts 21:13; Acts 21:33; Acts 22:5; Acts 22:29; Acts 24:27; Rom. 7:2; 1 Co. 7:27; 1 Co. 7:39; Col. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:9; Rev. 9:14; Rev. 20:2

**Deo** in the **Septuagint** - Gen. 38:28; Gen. 42:24; Jdg. 15:4; Jdg. 15:10; Jdg. 15:12; Jdg. 15:13; Jdg. 16:5; Jdg. 16:6; Jdg. 16:7; Jdg. 16:8; Jdg. 16:10; Jdg. 16:11; Jdg. 16:12; Jdg. 16:13; Jdg. 16:21; 2 Sam. 3:34; 2 Ki. 7:10; 2 Ki. 12:20; 2 Ki. 17:4; 2 Ki. 25:7; 2 Chr. 33:11; 2 Chr. 36:2; 2 Chr. 36:6; Job 32:19; Job 36:13; Job 39:10; Job 41:2; Job 41:5; Ps. 149:8; Prov. 15:7; Prov. 25:12; Cant. 7:5; Isa. 3:10; Isa. 22:3; Isa. 42:7; Isa. 43:14; Isa. 45:14; Jer. 33:1; Jer. 52:11; Ezek. 3:25; Ezek. 16:4; Ezek. 27:24; Ezek. 37:17; Dan. 4:17; Dan. 4:32; Hos. 10:6; Nah. 3:10;

**Released** (3080)(**luisis** from **lúo** = to loose, dissolve) means a loosening of or from any tie or constraint. Spoken of the conjugal tie, it means separation, divorce (1 Cor. 7:27).

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**Arnold** - **What then is the application for us?** There is a biblical principle: **In times of crisis, it may not be best to marry** There are some circumstances when marriage is not advisable or expedient:

- 1) When one is in deep financial debt;
- 2) When one has to go to war;

- 3) When one has been diagnosed as having a terminal or incurable illness;
  - 4) When there are major areas of philosophical and religious disagreements between two people;
  - 5) When there is a fierce independent spirit in a person, and
  - 6) When there is no common ground scripturally to get married. (cf 2 Cor 6:14-16)
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## **Remarriage: Two Views Two New Testament professors debate whether remarriage is acceptable for Christians.**

**By Craig Keener and William A. Heth**

### **Free to Remarry**

**By Craig Keener**

Although the Reformers (like most evangelicals today) allowed the innocent party in a divorce to remarry, many church fathers did not. The real issue is: What did the biblical writers' words mean to their readers in their culture? That answer is found in Jesus' stark warning that divorce was not valid in God's sight, and that remarriage was therefore adultery (Mark 10:11-12). As anyone who does not try to break up remarried couples implicitly recognizes, these words employ the ancient practice of rhetorical overstatement. All ancient listeners recognized that wisdom sayings, laws, and other concise, general statements were principles that needed to be qualified, as Jesus also observed when interpreting the Old Testament (Matthew 12:2-4). That Jesus' divorce saying was meant to be qualified is clear from the fact that four of the six New Testament texts addressing the issue explicitly qualify it. Matthew 5:32 and Mt 19:9 both allow divorce for the cause of infidelity. Other current interpretations of these passages provide novel proposals, but most interpret "infidelity" much more narrowly than ancient readers would have done. Some writers see the clause as a redundant overstatement of the obvious ("in the case of infidelity, infidelity has already been committed"). But in ancient divorce law, "infidelity" was a legal charge covering any kind of sexual unfaithfulness to the marriage, and this is precisely how Matthew's readers would have understood it. The very meaning of "divorce" in ancient law was freedom to remarry. Everyone (not just Jesus) forbade "remarriage" after an invalid divorce, because one's first marriage would not have been dissolved. If, however, the first marriage was unilaterally dissolved by one partner's choice, the marriage covenant was broken (1 Corinthians 7:16). Paul cites Jesus as forbidding remarriage to the party who "leaves" (1 Corinthians 7:10-11), but then qualifies this to allow the remaining party remarriage (1 Cor 7:12-16). That the abandoned believer is "not under bondage" echoes the exact language of ancient divorce contracts, using the technical designation for freedom to remarry. Following his common practice of digression, Paul allows divorcées the same opportunity for marriage as virgins in 1 Cor 7:17-27. (NIV's "unmarried" in 1 Cor 7:27 is the same Greek word as "divorced" in the preceding line.) Jesus forbade divorce to protect marriage and the innocent party; for us to penalize the innocent party is for us to be as hard of heart as those our Lord opposed.

### **Why Remarriage Is Wrong**

**By William A. Heth**

The most important reason for believing in lifelong marriage is rooted in Jesus' understanding of how God brought the first couple together (Genesis 1:27; 2:24). Jesus said, "Consequently they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:8-9, NASB). He therefore emphasizes the Genesis 2:24 teaching that marriage partners become closely related, that the marriage union is comparable to the kinship bond that exists between parents and children. Husband and wife, joined -by God (Matthew 19:6), become a single kindred, a new family unit. Sin may disrupt the marital love relationship; but sin does not nullify the marital kinship. Even though marital separation or legal divorce may be advisable under some circumstances (persistent adultery, abuse, incest), Jesus calls remarriage after any divorce adultery. Mark (Mk 10:2-12) and Luke (16:18) seem to be unaware of the permission for remarriage after divorce for sexual sins that evangelicals often find in Matthew (Mt 5:32; 19:9). Some argue that Jesus spoke in hyperbole and that Matthew makes explicit Mark and Luke's assumption that Jewish and Roman culture permitted divorce and remarriage for adultery. But this assumes that Matthew has not made it clear Jesus is teaching a different kind of "divorce." Yet Matthew notes that Jesus rejects the Pharisees' proof text for their views (Deuteronomy 24:1). Instead, Jesus appeals to Genesis 2:24 with its kinship understanding of marriage. Further, textual studies now confirm that the original text of both Matthew 19:9 and 5:32 contain Jesus' additional unqualified statement that finalizes his teaching on the subject: "And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Paul's "let them remain unmarried or else be reconciled" (1 Corinthians 7:10-11) says the same thing, and recent studies show that the likelihood that Paul's teaching on sexuality, marriage, and singleness in 1 Corinthians 6 and 7 stems from the same tradition shown in Matthew. Where Paul specifically mentions the possibility of remarriage, in both instances he notes quite explicitly that one of the spouses has died (1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2-3). Finally, in 1 Corinthians 7:27-28, Paul is not telling divorced individuals to feel free to remarry. He is telling engaged or formerly engaged couples who have come under the ascetic teaching at Corinth to feel free to marry should they so desire (see vv. 33-38). [This article originally appeared in the December 14, 1992 issue of Christianity Today.](#)

**1 Corinthians 7:28 But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.**

Amplified But if you do marry, you do not sin [in doing so], and if a virgin marries, she does not sin [in doing so]. Yet those who marry will have physical and earthly troubles, and I would like to spare you that.

Wuest But and if you marry, you did not sin. And if the virgin marry, she did not sin. However, such as these shall have tribulation in the sphere of one's physical existence [on earth]. But, as for myself, I would be sparing you. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:28 But if you marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face difficult circumstances, and I am trying to spare you such problems.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:28 But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married, it is not a sin. However, those who get married at this time will have troubles, and I am trying to spare you those problems.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:28 ἡ δὲ καὶ γαμσοῦχος μαρτυρεῖται καὶ ἡ ἄγαμος παρθένος, οὐχ ἁμαρταν. ἅλψιν δὲ τὴν σαρκὸς οὐ τοιοῦτοι, γὰρ δὲ μὴ φεδομαί.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:28 But and if thou mayest marry, thou didst not sin; and if the virgin may marry, she did not sin; and such shall have tribulation in the flesh: and I spare you.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:28 But shouldest thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh: and I would spare you.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:28 However, if you do get married, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But such people will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:28 But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:28 But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a virgin marries, she does not sin. Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:28 If you marry, however, you do not sin, nor does an unmarried woman sin if she marries; but such people will experience affliction in their earthly life, and I would like to spare you that.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:28 However, if you do get married, that is not a sin, and it is not sinful for a virgin to enter upon marriage. But such people will have the hardships consequent on human nature, and I would like you to be without that.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:28 But if you do get married, you have not sinned. If a virgin gets married, she has not sinned. However, these people will have trouble, and I would like to spare them from that.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:28 If you get married it is not a sin; and if an unmarried woman gets married it is not a sin. But those who do so will have trouble in the flesh. But I will not be hard on you.

- **have not:** 1Co 7:36 Heb 13:4
- **yet:** 1Co 7:26,32-34
- **I am trying to spare you:** 1Co 7:35 2Co 1:23
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**TO MARRY NOT A SIN  
BUT BRINGS MORE PROBLEMS**

**But if you marry, you have not sinned ([hamartano](#)); and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned ([hamartano](#))** - Paul does not condemn marriage.

**Arnold** - Notice Paul does not snarl at marriage in times of crisis. He just feels it is better to stay single. The fact of the matter is that most will not stay single, but it is best if they do.

**MacArthur** - The point is that marriage is a legitimate option, but it is good to consider first the option of singleness.

**Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare ([pheidomai](#)) you** - NET = "I am trying to spare you such problems." Marriage is not easy under the best of circumstances. So Paul is just offering this advice in light of the distress that the Corinthians were experiencing. As noted below trouble is [thlipsis](#) (from [thlibo](#) = press together in turn from [thláo](#) = to break) originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man and here Paul applies it figuratively to the pressures of marriage brought on by the fact that two sinners are "pressed together." After 52 years of marriage I can attest to Paul's use of [thlipsis](#) as very apropos!

**Guzik** - Paul felt (especially for himself) that the greater advantages were found in being single, yet he knows that each one has his own gift from God (1 Corinthians 7:7).. Most significantly, Paul never implies that being married or single is more spiritual than the other state. This was the big error of the Corinthian Christians.

**NET Note on such problems** - "I am trying to spare you." Direct objects were frequently omitted in Greek when clear from the context. "Such problems" has been supplied here to make the sense of the statement clear.

**Arnold** - Paul is not saying marriage automatically brings trouble into one's life, although many can testify to the fact that while marriage lifted some major pressures, it added many more cares: education, food, clothing, housing, bills, in-laws, etc. It may be more fun to live with someone else but it is certainly much more complicated. However, Paul is thinking about trouble in times of crisis due to persecution. It is one thing for a man to face persecution and even martyrdom, but it is quite another to bring this upon his wife and children. A man might be brave but turn coward at the sight of his wife and children being persecuted because of his personal faith in Christ. Paul's point is that in times of crisis, single life has advantages. Singles can be more flexible, can adapt more readily to certain cataclysmic conditions, can pick up and move if necessary, and can act without handling the affairs of others for whom they are responsible. Paul is not putting down marriage but is suggesting that for some singlehood might be the better course to take because marriage increases responsibilities.

**Sinned** ([264](#)) [hamartano](#) literally means to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize). Hamartano means to act contrary to the will and law of God. To commit a wrong. To be in error. Hamartano in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 6:18; 1 Co. 7:28; 1 Co. 7:36; 1 Co. 8:12; 1 Co. 15:34

**Trouble** ([2347](#)) [thlipsis](#) from [thlibo](#) = to crush, press together, squash, hem in, compress, squeeze in turn derived from [thláo](#) = to break) originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. **Thlipsis** is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships. Medically **thlipsis** was used of the pulse (pressure). It is a pressing together as of grapes. It conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight. When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**. The iron cage was [stenochoria](#). **Thlipsis** thus refers not to mild discomfort but to great difficulty. **Thlipsis** in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 7:28; 2 Co. 1:4; 2 Co. 1:8; 2 Co. 2:4; 2 Co. 4:17; 2 Co. 6:4; 2 Co. 7:4; 2 Co. 8:2; 2 Co. 8:13;

**1 Corinthians 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;**

Amplified I mean, brethren, the appointed time has been winding down and it has grown very short. From now on, let even those who have wives be as if they had none,

Wuest But this I am saying, brethren, The strategic, epochal period of time [in which we are living] has been shortened, that henceforth both those who have wives be as though not having wives, ([Erdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:29 And I say this, brothers and sisters: The time is short. So then those who have wives should be as those who have none,

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:29 But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage.



ESV 1 Corinthians 7:29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none,

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:29 What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none;

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:29 το το ὄ φημι, δελφοι, καιρος συνεσταλμνος σιν· τ λοιπον, να κα ο χοντες γυνακας ς μ χοντες σιν

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:29 And this I say, brethren, the time henceforth is having been shortened -- that both those having wives may be as not having;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is shortened, that henceforth both those that have wives may be as though they had none;

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:29 And I say this, brothers: The time is limited, so from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none,

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:29 I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none,

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:29 I tell you, brothers, the time is running out. From now on, let those having wives act as not having them,

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:29 What I mean, brothers, is that the time has become limited, and from now on, those who have spouses should live as though they had none;

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:29 This is what I mean, brothers and sisters: The time has been shortened. While it lasts, those who are married should live as though they were not.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:29 But I say this, my brothers, the time is short; and from now it will be wise for those who have wives to be as if they had them not;

- **the time:** Job 14:1,2 Ps 39:4-7 90:5-10 103:15,16 Ec 6:12 9:10 Ro 13:11,12 Heb 13:13,14 1Pe 4:7 2Pe 3:8,9 1Jn 2:17
- that both: Ec 12:7,8,13,14 Isa 24:1,2 40:6-8 Jas 4:13-16 1Pe 1:24
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **TIME IS SHORT REDEEM THE TIME!**

So the first reason it is better to remain single is because of the present distress and here is the second reason which is because the time is short (the time of our life on earth, the time of this present age)

**MacArthur** points out that "The focus of this passage (1 Cor 7:29-31) is at the end of verse 31: for the form of this world is passing away. Form (schēma) means "fashion, manner of life, way of doing things, or mode of existence." The mode of the world is impermanence; it is passing away.

**But this I say, brethren** ([adelphos](#)) - ICB = "this is what I mean." Say is not the usual word lego but phemi.

As **Ellicott** says "there is a change of word (from λέγω to φημι), in order probably to give special emphasis to the assertion—"But this I do declare: though I counsel none to change their *state*, I counsel all to change their *attitude* towards these and all other earthly things. And what are the earthly interests towards which Christian men are to change their attitude? He names marriage, weeping, rejoicing, buying, and the use of the world generally. But how is this possible? Because the time is short—literally "is shortened, abridged"—there is no very long time now for any one to feel the duty of detachment irksome. And finally there is wisdom in it, for this world is neither essential nor enduring—"the fashion of this world passeth away.""

**The time has been shortened** - **Time** ([kairos](#)) refers to a definite period of time, like a season (for growing wheat, etc), and once it passes, it is over. "This is not going to last long. Very soon it will be over." Literally this could be read as ""the opportunity is compressed, or shut in," the point being that time is short with reference to its opportunities. **NLT** "The time that remains is very

short." Or as Alan Jackson sings below "Life goes on for a little bitty while."We are not to be so distracted by things. Married people are **DISTRACTED**.

**Ryrie** - Because time to serve Christ is short, all should live for Him in every circumstance of life.

[Well, it's alright to be little bitty](#)

Little hometown or a big old city

Might as well share, might as well smile

**Life goes on for a little bitty while**

**Barnes** - The **time** is "contracted," "drawn into a narrow space" (sunestalmenos). The word which is used here is commonly applied to the act of "furling" a sail, that is, reducing it into a narrow compass; and is then applied to anything that is reduced within narrow limits. Perhaps there was a reference here to the fact that the time was "contracted," or made short, by their impending persecutions and trials. But it is always equally true that **time is short**. It will soon glide away, and come to a close. The idea of the apostle here is, that the plans of life should all be formed in view of this truth, that time is short. No plan should be adopted which does not contemplate this; no engagement of life made when it will not be appropriate to think of it; no connection entered into when the thought "time is short," would be an unwelcome intruder; see 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:8-9.

**Ellicott** writes "An illusion haunts us, that a long duration, as a year, a decade, a century, is valuable. But an old French sentence says, "God works in moments"—"En peu d'heure Dieu labeure." We ask for long life, but 'tis deep life, or grand moments that signify. Let the measure of Time be spiritual, not mechanical. Life is unnecessarily long. Moments of insight, of fine personal relation, a smile, a glance—what ample borrowers of eternity they are!"

**Chuck Smith** - **Time is short**. He is actually saying, "We don't have time, really, to get involved in marital relationships. We don't have time to indulge in grief or sorrow. We don't have time for partying and revelry. We don't have time to amass possessions. We are in the world, but let's not abuse it. Let us use it; we have got to live. We have got to eat so do what you have to, but don't get overly involved, for the fashion of the world is passing away, or is rapidly passing away." So, as Paul was looking at the situation in his day, at the deterioration of the whole social scene of the things taking place, he gives these warnings. Time is short, things are rapidly passing away, we really don't have time for the extraneous.

And soon the months will roll away,  
And quickly come the nuptial day,  
When Thou, the Lamb, shalt take Thy throne  
And fully there Thy Church shalt own.  
—Isaac Watts

**Jack Arnold** - Paul now gives the second reason why it is **wise to stay single**. It is that **the time is short**, and this is covered in 1 Cor 7:29-31. Some have thought this is a reference to the Second Coming of Christ, but it does not say this (ED: I BEG TO DISAGREE - THE TIME OF HIS COMING IS ALWAYS NIGH AND TODAY WE ARE ONE DAY CLOSER THAN YESTERDAY, SO THE TIME HAS BECOME SHORTENED!). I personally think Paul is referring to the **brevity of life**, especially in the midst of persecution.. The older one gets, the quicker time seems to fly by (ED: AT AGE 75 IN 2021 I SAY "AMEN!"). All men become aware of the shortness of time. Christians become aware of how few years they have on earth to do the things God desires and to fully experience the exciting adventures God has for those who love Him. Non-Christians are aware of the shortness of time, and their philosophy is, "*Time is flying; we only go around life once, so let's grab all we can of it. Let's live it up with gusto. There is nothing beyond death so we have to experience all of life we can.*" This certainly is not the Christian philosophy of life. Christians are to use fleeting time to the maximum for eternal purposes -- to reach a lost and dying world, to build up the church, to serve the Lord, to develop a spiritual life through prayer and Bible study, etc. The center of the Christian's life should not just be making a living but making a life pleasing to the Lord.

**Related Resource:**

- Redeem the Time
- Ponder the Words of this poignant song by Robin Mark (God used it mightily in my life!) [When It's All Been Said and Done](#)

**Expositor's Greek Testament** says **time** (**kairos**) refers to "the season, the epoch of suspense in which the Church was then placed, looking for Christ's coming (1 Corinthians 1:7+) and uncertain of its date. The prospect is "*contracted*" so short views must be taken of life.

**Spurgeon** gives 7 points of application in light of the truth that the "**The time is limited.**"

1. First, this statement **warns**, next it suggests, then it inspires, and lastly it alarms. Paul warns because if

we knew the real worth of time we would shrink from the smallest waste of so precious a thing. We cannot afford to lose it in senseless talk, idle gossip, or scandals. I wish it could be said of us that we wasted neither an hour of our own time nor an hour of other people's time. By the brevity of time and by the rapidity of its flight, I admonish all of us to invest each hour in some profitable manner that, when past, it may not be lost.

2. **The time is limited** also suggests that we have **no time for dreary intervals spent in wandering and backsliding**, for retracing our steps in repenting of evil, for becoming lukewarm and then rekindling our former commitment.
3. **The time is limited** also should **inspire** us. It ought to fire us with zeal for immediate action. The time to do the deeds we must do, or leave undone, flies swiftly past. **The time is limited** for others (THAT IS THOSE WHO ARE LOST) as well. I want to ring this sentence louder and louder in our ears that it may inspire us to pray for immediate conversions.
4. Then seeing that **the time is limited**, let us **bear with patience** the ills that trouble us. Are we poor? **The time is limited.** Does the bitter cold pierce through our scanty garments? **The time is limited.** Is illness beginning to prey on our trembling frame? **The time is limited.** Are we unkindly treated by our relatives? Do our associates revile and our neighbors mock us? **The time is limited.** Have we to bear evil treatment from an ungenerous world? **The time is limited.** Do cruel taunts try our tempers? **The time is limited.** We are traveling at express speed and will soon be beyond the reach of all the incidents and happenings that disturb and distract us.
5. Since **the time is limited** in which we can hold any possessions in this terrestrial sphere, **let us not love anything here below too fondly.** "We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out" (1Ti 6:7, cf Job 1:21).
6. **The time is limited** should inspire us who are of the household of faith with the most **joyous expectations** because its fulfillment is near.
7. **The time is limited** also should **alarm** us. For those who have not believed in Christ and embraced the gospel, **the time is limited.** There is not time enough to spare. Time is rushing on swiftly but silently. It soon will be lost for all eternity.

#### Related Resource:

- [1 Corinthians 7:29 "The Time Is Short"](#) - C H Spurgeon

**Time** (season, epoch) (2540) **kairos** means a point of time or period of time, time, period, frequently with the implication of being especially fit for something and without emphasis on precise chronology. It describes the period as especially appropriate and favorable (the right time). Stated another way **kairos** is distinguished from **chronos** (time) because **kairos** views TIME from the aspect of the strategic opportunity it provides, and not simply a change from the past into the present into the future, not mere duration. ([Trench](#)) Something that lasts for a season and so is transient, temporary or enduring only for a specific period of time. Kairos is a period which is especially appropriate - a favorable time (at the right time). **Kairos** in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 4:5; 1 Co. 7:5; 1 Co. 7:29; 2 Co. 6:2; 2 Co. 8:14.

[Ellicott](#) - **Time** may be long, and yet the opportunity may be very short. The sun in autumn may be bright and clear, but the seed which has not been sown until then will not vegetate. A man may have vigour and energy in manhood and maturity, but the work which ought to have been done in childhood and youth cannot be done in old age. A chance once gone in this world can never be recovered.....Iron passes into the furnace cold and unyielding; coming out it quickly cools and refuses the mould; but midway is a moment when fire so lends itself to iron, and iron so yields its force to flame that the metal flows like water. This brief plastic moment is the inventor's opportunity, when the metal will take on any shape for use or beauty.

#### Related Resource:

- Redeem the Time

#### WHEN I HAVE TIME!

When I have time, so many things I'll do,  
To make life happier and more fair  
For those whose lives are crowded now with care,

I'll help to lift them from their low despair

When I have time.

When I have time, the friend I love so well  
Shall know no more the weary, toiling days;  
I'll lead his feet in pleasant paths always,  
And cheer his heart with words of sweetest praise,

When I have time.

When you have time! The friend you hold so dear  
May be beyond the reach of all your sweet intent,  
May never know that you so kindly meant  
To fill his life with bright content,

When you had time.

Now is the time! Speed, friend, no longer wait  
To scatter loving smiles and words of cheer  
To those around, whose lives are now so drear;  
They may not need you in that far-off year:

Now is the time.

**Shortened** (4958) (**sustello** from **sun** = with + **stello** = shortened as sails) means send (draw) together, i.e. enwrap (enshroud a corpse for burial), contract (an interval) **Sustello** means "contracted and rolled up, as sails used were furled by the mariners as the ship drew to the harbor. (I) To deck together, wrap together, envelop, wind in a garment or robe. Of a dead body rolled up and swathed for burial (Acts 5:6; Sept.: Ezek. 29:5). (II) To draw together, to contract. Figuratively in the pass., to shrink together, be distressed, anxious. Hence, in 1 Cor. 7:29, "the time is full of distress" (a.t.). Others interpret it "the time is short." Robertson - Found in the papyri for curtailing expenses. Calvin takes it for the shortness of human life, but apparently Paul pictures the foreshortening of time (opportunity) because of the possible nearness of and hope for the second coming. But in Philippians Paul faces death as his fate (Phil 1:21-26), though still looking for the coming of Christ (1 Phil 3:20).

**So that** - Term of purpose. In light of the fleeting of time, Paul tells the Corinthians what their purpose should be (in the context of marital relationships).

**From now on those who have wives should be as though they had none** - ICB - "So starting now, those who have wives should use their time to serve the Lord as if they had no wives." What is Paul saying? He is certainly not telling husbands to ignore their wives as if they did not exist or were of no importance. He is saying that husbands should not focus totally on their marriage at the expense of other things of spiritual and eternal value. To be sure now we treat our wives has eternal ramifications, but they are not be our sole focus in this short life. The proper implication of this passage calls for Spirit filled balance (in my humble opinion)! The husband's first allegiance is to the Lord Who owns him, and if he seeks first His Kingdom and His righteousness, what the Lord has for him to accomplish in this short time will be revealed.

The idiom **as though they had none** continues through 1 Cor 7:31 (note fourfold repetition of "and those"). The first two and those deal with emotions (sadness, joy) and the last two with possessions (whether we buy or use things of the world).

**Stephen Armstrong** - Paul says we who marry must be willing to live as if we are not married. Paul isn't asking us to abandon our wives or husbands for the sake of the Gospel. But in terms of our affections and priorities, we must be willing to follow Christ's commands without allowing our marital commitment to stand in the way of obedience. If the Lord asks us to devote our life to serving Him in a dangerous overseas location, would we say yes to the Lord if we were single? Then we must be willing to say yes to Him if we are married and have children. We can't use our married life as excuse to say no to the Lord's call. That's the price we pay for choosing to marry in view of these difficult times

**Guzik** - Paul is not encouraging the neglect of proper family duties, but encouraging living as if the time is short. It means that we will not live as if our earthly family was all that mattered, but also live with an eye to eternity. A **time is short attitude** will also not indulge the feelings and things of this world. Weeping, rejoicing, and having possessions must not get in the way of following hard after Jesus.

**THOUGHT** - I like to refer to this as **Vertical Vision** - we live on earth "horizontally" so speak, focused on

earthly things, but that focus needs to be tempered and even dominated by focus on heavenly things or "**Vertical Vision**." See notes on [Vertical Vision](#)

**MacArthur** notes that Paul "does not teach that marriage is no longer binding on believers or that their marital responsibilities are reduced....Paul is teaching that marriage should not reduce a Christian's obligation and devotion to the Lord and His work. The responsibilities of marriage are no excuse for slacking the Lord's work. That is to invert the priorities.

**Arnold** - This is a very difficult verse to interpret. What does Paul mean? Should we neglect our wives, divorce our mates, leave our spouses and go to the mission field because the time is flying by? No, **what Paul is saying is that married people have to keep things in proper focus**. The husband and wife are not to live for themselves but for Christ and are to serve Him the best they can in spite of distractive responsibilities that come with marriage. There are higher demands and greater challenges than just maintaining a marriage. God has placed a man and a woman together so they can serve Him together (cf Eccl 4:12). Therefore, Christian couples are not to let all the things the world around them lives for become the center of their lives (**ED**: OR AS PAUL SAYS IN COLOSSIANS - "**Set your mind** [[present imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)] on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." Col 3:2+ AND IN ROMANS - "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And **do not be conformed** [[present imperative with a negative](#)] [DO NOT BE Poured INTO THE MOLD OF] to this world, but **be transformed** [[present imperative](#)] by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. " Ro 12:1-2+). As Christians in a marriage, we must get the right attitude about material things, occupying our minds with spiritual and eternal matters rather than worldly matters (**ED**: "But **seek** [[present imperative](#)] first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Mt 6:33+).

**H A Ironside** - Paul does not mean that they are to disown their wives, to be cold and indifferent toward them, or hard and unkind. Nothing like that, for he has already inculcated the very opposite principle (**ED**: And will emphasize this even more in later letters - see Eph 5:25-29+). He means that the one thing to live for is not your own happiness as husband and wife, but if you are united in the Lord, see that your great business is to live for Him. (**ED**: OF COURSE THIS IS MAXIMIZED, IF YOUR WIFE IS ALSO A WORD CENTERED, SPIRIT FILLED BELIEVER!)

**ILLUSTRATION** - A dear friend of mine spent a great deal of his time traveling around the world giving out the gospel and his precious wife remained at home perhaps two-thirds of the year caring for the little family. I once said to her, "It must get awfully lonely for you. You hardly have any married life living like this." Her eyes filled with tears, and she said, "The day my husband and I were married we promised each other we would never let our personal comfort interfere with our devotion to the work of the Lord, and I believe He called my husband for this great evangelistic ministry, and therefore I am glad to keep the house while he goes out to his work." I said, "I have a choice tidbit for you. Have you noticed what David said concerning those that abide by the stuff while the others go out to war? He said, 'As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff' (1 Samuel 30:24). And so if you carry out your part, when the judgment seat of Christ is set up and you and your husband stand there before God (2 Cor 5:10+), if he has thousands of precious souls to his credit for whom he is to be rewarded in that day, you will get half of it, even though you could not go out and do the preaching, for the Lord says that those who abide by the stuff shall share with those that go to battle." That is the principle. Every one is to act in view of the fact that the time indeed is fleeting, the Lord's return is nearing, and no consideration of personal comfort is to be allowed to hinder devotion to the will of God. ([Ironside](#))

**Barnes** - This does not mean that they are to treat them with unkindness or neglect, or fail in the duties of love and fidelity. It is to be taken in a general sense, that they were to live above the world (cf Col 3:2+, Php 3:20-21+); that they were not to be unduly attached to them that they were to be ready to part with them; and that they should not suffer attachment to them to interfere with any duty which they owed to God. They were in a world of trial; and they were exposed to persecution; and as Christians they were bound to live entirely to God, and they ought not, therefore, to allow attachment to earthly friends to alienate their affections from God, or to interfere with their Christian duty. **In one word, they ought to be "just as faithful to God," and "just as pious," in every respect, as if they had no wife and no earthly friend. Such a consecration to God is difficult, but not impossible. Our earthly attachments and cares draw away our affections from God, but they need not do it.** Instead of being the occasion of alienating our affections from God, they should be, and they might be, the means of binding us more firmly and entirely to him and to his cause. But alas, how many professing Christians live for their wives and children only, and not for God in these relations! how many suffer these earthly objects of attachment to alienate their minds from the ways and commandments of God, rather than make them the occasion of uniting them more tenderly to him and his cause! ([Commentary](#))

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**Seneca** - We all complain of the shortness of time; and yet we have more than we know what to do with. Our lives are spent either in doing nothing at all, or in doing nothing to the purpose, or in doing nothing that we ought to do. We are always complaining that our

days are few, and acting as though there would be no end of them.

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### **MORNING READING: JOHN 9 - Stephen Olford**

"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day." – John 9:4

The true principle of all real service for God underlies this statement of the Lord Jesus. And since He was the perfect Servant when upon this earth, He made this principle the basis of His loyal service to God.

The Obligation of True Service. The Lord Jesus said, "I must work." The obligation of loving and loyal service to His Father compelled Him to work. Yes, right from the beginning (remember the temple when He was twelve years old?) to the end.

The Occupation of True Service. There is only one great occupation in true service – it is doing God's will. I must work the "works of Him." "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me," said the Savior (John 4:34).

The Opportunity of True Service. "While it is day." Now is the acceptable time ... "Time is short" (1 Cor. 7:29).

I can do nothing else but serve You, Lord, all of my days,  
For it is a privilege and an honor – yes, even my duty!

[According to Your Word: Morning and Evening](#)

See John 9:4 COMMENTARY NOTES for multiple devotionals that deal with a similar thought of work while you still have time to work!

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### **James Smith - THE TIME IS SHORT 1 CORINTHIANS 7:29**

- For Study: Be Decided, 1 Kgs. 18:21
  - For Salvation: Be Instant, 2 Cor. 6:2
  - For Service: Be Diligent, Col 3:23
  - For Suffering: Be Patient, Jas. 5:7
- 

### **Audie Lewis - Scraps of Time - What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:29**

Could it be possible for me to come to every one of you personally and grasp you by the hand, I would with most affectionate earnestness—yea, even with tears—pray you by him to whom you owe your souls, awake and render personal service to the Lover of your souls; make no excuse, for no excuse can be valid from those who are bought with so great a price. Your business, you will tell me, requires so much of your thoughts—I know it does; then use your business in such a way as to serve God in it. Still there must be some scraps of time that you could devote to holy service; there must be some opportunities for directly aiming at conversions. To some of you the excuse of "business" would not apply, for you have seasons of leisure. Oh, I beseech you, let not that leisure be driveled away in frivolities, in mere talk, in sleep and self-indulgence! Time is hastening and men are perishing. With such awful demands upon us, we cannot afford to trifle. Oh, that I had the power to stir the heart and soul of all my fellow Christians by a description of this huge city wallowing in iniquity. Surely sin, the grave, and hell are themes that might create a tingling even in the dull, cold ear of death. Oh, that I could set before you the Redeemer upon the cross dying to ransom souls! Oh, that I could depict the heaven that sinners lose, and their remorse when they shall find themselves self-excluded!

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### **James Smith - Life quickly glides away!**

"But this I say, brethren — the time is short!" 1 Corinthians 7:29

Our time on earth is short — and it is daily growing shorter!

Life quickly glides away — and death and eternity rapidly approaches.

In a little while — we shall close our eyes on all the scenes of earth, and be done with all the concerns of time.

Few things fly swifter than time, or teach us more solemn lessons. Yet we slight them, and forget them, or fail to improve them. O for grace to derive comfort, reproof, and stimulus from the brevity of time.

"The time is short!" Then our troubles must be short, for they are all limited to time. They are the offspring of sin, and will not out-live their parent! Every trouble, leaves one the less to be endured. Soon the last trouble will arrive! Let us therefore . . .



- bear them with patience,
- endure them with fortitude, and
- rejoice in the prospect of bidding them an eternal farewell.

Our sharpest, severest trials — will soon be ended! And then, all that will remain, will be eternal peace and joy!

"The time is short!" Then the pleasures of time will soon terminate!

As sweet as they are — they are all fleeting!

Prize them as we may — we must soon part with them. Not one of them will go with us beyond the dying bed. Let us not, then, value them too highly, or set our hearts too much upon them.

Earthly comforts, worldly distinctions and honors — will soon have passed away. The rich and the poor will soon meet together in the graveyard. The peasant and the prince, the beggar and monarch — will alike slumber together in the dust. Let us then, if tempted to think too much of the worldly distinctions, or value too highly the comforts of life — remember that the time is short!

"The time is short!" Then Jesus will soon be here! How will many things appear, which now occupy our time, engross our attention, and steal away our hearts — when Jesus comes?

Believer, "the time is short," lift up your head with joy. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for. . .

- your tribulation will soon cease,
- your sorrow will soon flee away, and
- the days of your mourning shall be ended.

Time is the limit of your trials, temptations, and troubles.

Time is the limit of your conflicts, doubts, and fears.

Time is the limit of your pains, privations, and griefs.

Beyond time — all is . . .

- peace and pleasure,
- purity and perfection,
- happiness and rest!

Lift up then your head with joy, for your redemption, your eternal redemption draws near!

### **Vance Havner - 1 Corinthians 7:29**

To one past his threescore and ten the picture in the show window holds a poignant charm. For all its "dangers, toils and snares" I have enjoyed my stay in this old world. Spoiled by sin and soiled by sinners it is but a wreck of its earlier beauty—but it still holds much that reminds us of its former glory and of the grandeur yet to come when it shall be redeemed. The wild ducks leave the northern lakes but they expect to return. I am anticipating my migration to a better realm but I plan to come back to reign with the saints on a restored earth. Then one day there will be new heavens and a new earth and that will be our eternal home. What a prospect! No wonder the heart beats faster in the autumn of our days when so much lies ahead!

These falling leaves, the flaming sumac, this nip of winter in the air—all these suggest to the Christian what this world knows nothing of. It is the tragedy of the church that we have lost our pilgrim character and driven down our tent pegs in these poor lowlands as though we were here to stay. If we understood what transients we really are it would put everything in a new perspective and add a zest to our present stay that so few Christians know.

Cheer up, my fellow migrants, it will soon be time to move!

### **Don Fortner - 'The time is short'**

We are living in a world where all things are temporary. Everything here is perishing. And we are going to a world where all things are eternal. If we are wise we shall live in this world of time with our hearts fixed on eternity. And when we look at all things in this world with an eye to eternity there is one striking fact that we cannot avoid.

The time of your life is short. 'What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.' 'My days

are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. 'My friend, your days are numbered. Soon you will have taken your last breath. Be warned! The time for salvation is short. Today is the day of salvation. This is the accepted time. Today you must come to Christ, laying hold of his righteousness and shed blood as the only grounds of your acceptance before God. For you who are the children of God, the time for service is short. 'The hour cometh when no man can work.' Let us give ourselves to the service of our Redeemer while the time remains. And, blessed be God, the time for suffering is short. Let us not faint, nor grow weary, 'For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

Since the time is short, we must be detached from the things of this world. We must hold the dearest objects of this life with a loose hand and cling only to Christ. Take your dearest earthly possessions—your money, your lands, your friends, your family and place this brand upon them—perishing! Christ alone and the riches of his grace are eternal.

What then must we do with the time that we have? We must redeem the time. Buy up every opportunity to worship and serve Christ. Buy up every opportunity to point men and women to Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Much time is gone already, the days are evil and the time that remains is short. Therefore I say, redeem the time.

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### **C H Spurgeon - A drama in five acts 1 Corinthians 7:29–31**

When the apostle declares that 'they that have wives be as though they had none,' he does not teach us to despise the marriage state, but not to seek our heaven in it, nor let it hinder our serving the Lord. It is supposed that there are some things which a man without a wife and family can do—those things the man with a wife and family should do. It is supposed that a man without a wife can give his time to the cause of God: the man with a wife should do the same, and he will not find it difficult to do if God has blessed him with one who will second all his holy endeavours. It is supposed that a man without a wife has no care: a man with a wife should have none, for he should cast all his cares on God who cares for him. 'If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;' and yet the apostle says, in the verse following my text, 'But I would have you without carefulness;' for we should learn to live by faith. The man who has a large family, and many things to exercise his mind, should yet, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, live as quietly and comfortably as though he had none, depending and resting by simple faith upon the providence and goodness of God. Then, again, it is supposed that an unmarried man will find it easier to die, for there will be none of that sorrow at leaving his beloved family: the man with a wife and family should, by faith, find it just as easy since the promise runs, 'Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.'

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### **Vance Havner - Time to Be Serious**

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

THIS solemn statement of Paul sets forth our pattern of conduct in the last days. It begins and ends with a reminder of how short and changing are these fleeting times: "The time is short.... The fashion of this world passeth away." Of course, there is a sense in which the time has always been short. It was short in Paul's day for, compared with endless eternity, the whole stretch of history is less than a drop of water beside all the oceans. But now, with all the signs of the times fast converging and God's signals going off all around us, who can doubt that the sands of the age are running low? It is true that at every crisis of history there have always been some to prophesy that judgment was just around the corner. But their mistakes do not mean that we will not eventually reach that corner. Never have all the trends and tendencies and indications that mark the end of the age come together in such a pattern as we now behold. To go into that is not the purpose of this message, but humble students of the Word and the times are growing pretty unanimous that "the time is short."

Nothing is clearer in the Word of God than that in these last days Christians are called to unusual seriousness and special urgency, while they walk circumspectly, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Especially does the Word exhort believers to "be sober." The bishop must be sober (1 Tim. 3:2). The deacons' wives must be sober (1 Tim. 3:11). Soberness is enjoined upon aged men (Titus 2:2), young women (Titus 2:4), and young men (Titus 2:6). We are to gird up the loins of our minds and be sober (1 Pet. 1:13), to think of ourselves soberly (Rom. 12:3), and to be sober and vigilant (1 Pet. 5:8).

In the light of God's picture of the times, in the urgency and emergency of a world hastening to disaster, surely, if ever the church ought to live with loins girded and lamps burning, praying and preaching with the light of another world in her eyes, it is today. Over and over we are exhorted to awake, to watch and pray, to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. It was for such a time that Paul set forth in the words of the text the urgency of the situation and our proper behavior in

it.

"It remaineth that... they that have wives be as though they had none." Believers are not to be too much taken up with domestic cares. Now the world gives too little importance to marriage, as the divorce courts testify: but some Christians make it too important, so that it becomes their whole life. It was a mark of Noah's day that the people were marrying and giving in marriage (Matt. 24:38), that is, such things were their life. In these last days we are not to make home and family our supreme concern.

Many Christians will not need this injunction, for they do not even love their families enough. But others will need to hear our Lord's word about hating father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and even one's own life. Evangelists and missionaries often have had to keep Paul's word literally, but to the general Christian witness in the last days it merely means that domestic interests shall not be our prime concern. Of course, some crank will get the text by the wrong handle and suppose that he is to turn celibate, but Paul assumed that the average reader would apply it with sanctified common sense.

"And they that weep as though they wept not." We are not to be too much taken up with our sorrows. We are to be "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10). Concerning departed loved ones, we are not to sorrow as others who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). We are not to nurse old heartaches, mistakes and bereavements, living in the past beside the casket of the dead in the graveyard of yesterday. Forgetting the things that are behind, we are to let the dead bury their dead. God said to Joshua: "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan" (Josh. 1:2). The time is too short to spend it with our sorrows. It is not a cold, hard stoicism that is set before us here. Rather, Jesus is coming! There is too much to do to be occupied with our own troubles.

"And they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not." We are not to be too much taken up with our joys. We are to sit loose to our enjoyments and not to be so occupied, even with wholesome pastimes and recreations, that we cannot do without them. Ministers whose golf score is better than their prayer score may well take heed! We must be moderate even in our mirth, for such things are not our chief portion. Our joy is in the Lord, and it is easy to let the good endanger the best. If Satan cannot entrap us in our sorrows he will ensnare us with our joys.

In times of great crisis ordinary mirth is quite out of place. God's alarm clock is going off every hour nowadays, and Christians should not be content with conduct which ordinarily would have been sufficient in times past. These are no ordinary times and ordinary conduct is unbecoming! During floods, earthquakes, wars, people forego ordinary comforts, revise all their habits, and do things they never would do in ordinary times. If these temporal things stir men to unusual conduct, how much more should the people of God arouse themselves in these fearful days with unutterable judgment fast approaching! This is no time for trivial, silly banter and the small talk with which men come even to the doors of the church on the Lord's Day and which they resume as soon as they go out. Listening to us Christians around the church on Sunday morning, one would never suspect that the world was on fire, that Jesus was coming and that we were Christ's witnesses in the end of the age. Verily, some mistaken sects and isms put us to shame, standing on street corners in all kinds of weather, handing out their literature of error, while we live in a day of good tidings and hold our peace! We are so taken up with our little joys that the supreme joy is quenched within us.

"And they that buy as though they possessed not." It is not that we are to wear gunny-sack garments, for there is no holiness in a hair shirt, but we must be poor in spirit. What we possess must not possess us. Many are kept away from the Great Supper because of land and oxen. In the last days it shall be as in the days of Lot: "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded" (Lk. 17:28). These things were their life and they must not be ours. This is no time for believers to hang up their stockings for the Santa Claus of this age to fill. It is no time to feather our nest with earthly comforts. Someone has said, "Not wanting a thing is comparable to possessing it." And even better than possessing many things is to be independent of them.

"And they that use this world, as not abusing it." It is the present world set-up that is in mind, the system which is so unmistakably under the prince of darkness. To be sure, we must have cars, clothes, money; we are not to hide in a cave (cf. 1 Cor. 5:10). But these things are but a means to an end, and the traveler must not become absorbed in his baggage. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me. Lest I be full and deny thee and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov. 30:8, 9). We are not glorifying poverty, for it is easy to fall into the Colossian error of a false mysticism, asceticism and neglecting of the body. It has been said: "Humility does not consist in thinking meanly of ourselves; it consists in not thinking of ourselves at all." "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8). "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). There are too many de luxe Christians who adopt a manner of living that poorly befits the way of the cross.

We are to use but not abuse. "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5). There is something a little ironical in a congregation of elegantly dressed Christians with jewels galore singing, "Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold!" And it is a little amusing to watch a smug and comfortable crowd singing lustily, "A tent or a cottage, Why should I care? They're building a mansion for me over there!" This world is our passage and not our portion, but some of us drive our tent-pegs down as though we meant to stay.

"For the fashion of this world is passing away." It is not that it merely may pass or will pass, it is passing away right now before our eyes. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof" (1 John 2:17). The old colored mammy who explained her tranquillity by saying, "I wear dis world lak a loose garment," was pretty near the truth of our text. And since the time is short and the fashion of this world passeth away and all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be? "Let us who are of the day BE SOBER" (1 Thess. 5:8).

There are boys selling newspapers and peddlers getting out their wares with more zeal than most of us ever rescue souls or preach the Word. A chaplain once asked his company just before they went into action, "Do you want me to conduct religious services or just tell you a good story?" and one soldier answered, "If you feel that way about it you might as well tell us a story." Some such flippant attitude is the mark of too many of us in this sad day. Life is too short and eternity is too long and souls are too precious and the Gospel is too wonderful for us to take it easy. Living in perilous times, in a crumbling civilization, with men's hearts failing them for fear, if ever God's people ought to live as "fools for Christ's sake," beside themselves and "drunk on new wine," as a peculiar people whose citizenship is in heaven, surely it is now. Let us be sober, for "the time is short" and "the fashion of this world passeth away."

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### **Hard Sayings of the Bible - Live as Though You Had No Spouse?**

What does Paul mean? How can one live with one's spouse "as if" one had none? And why should we have to or want to? How and why is "shortness of time" a factor in favor of living "as if"?

In the preceding paragraph (1 Cor 7:25–28), Paul has just counseled single persons, in view of "the present crisis," to remain single (1 Cor 7:26). Should they, however, decide to marry, they would not be sinning. Yet, as married persons, they would "face many troubles in this life," and he wants to spare them this difficult time (1 Cor 7:28).

This reference to difficult experiences is most likely connected with the earlier mention of a "present crisis" (1 Cor 7:26), as well as with the reference to "the time is short" (1 Cor 7:29). An understanding of the image-world behind these cryptic phrases is imperative if we are to follow Paul's reasoning.

Early Christianity, in continuity with Jesus' teaching about the inbreaking of the kingdom of God and its future consummation, was heir to Jewish understandings of the present and expectations about the future. Their understanding is known as apocalyptic eschatology. The word eschatology comes from the Greek words for "last" and "word," and means "teaching about the end." The word apocalyptic comes from the Greek word *apokalyptō*, which means "to reveal." Its noun form is *apokalypsis* ("revelation").

Apocalyptic eschatology, as a particular way of understanding the present and envisioning the future, arose in Judaism during the last three centuries B.C. The canonical book of Daniel is its earliest literary expression, which was followed by a host of apocalypses, literary works published in the names of worthy figures in Israel's past, which sought to "reveal" the meaning of Israel's present experience of bondage, deprivation and evil in light of God's purposes. Some of these apocalyptic works were part of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, read by Diaspora Jews (that is, Jews living outside Palestine) and later Gentile and Jewish Christians.

The main features of the worldview of these visionaries within Israel are the following: (1) the belief that this present age was largely under the control of evil powers; (2) the conviction that the suffering of God's faithful people in this present evil age was a necessary part of the outworking of a divine plan; (3) the certainty that history was quickly moving toward its climax and that the time immediately prior to the cataclysmic destruction of this world and the creation of a new one would be a time of intense tribulation and crisis; (4) the participation, in the outworking of God's purposes, of a transcendent figure seen as one like a man, or the Son of Man; (5) the belief that the day of the Lord, the day of his victory over the powers of evil, would be accompanied by the resurrection of the dead (or at least of the righteous dead).

It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus taught and carried on his ministry in light of this Jewish apocalyptic understanding. The battle with evil powers was signaled in his exorcism of demons and interpreted in parables, such as the one about the strong man, whose realm is invaded by one stronger than he (Lk 11:17–22). Satan's power over this present age is breaking (Lk 10:18); the "prince of this world" shall now be cast out (Jn 12:31). Jesus is the apocalyptic Son of Man in whom the reign of God is already breaking into this age, and who will come again to gather his righteous ones (Lk 13:27), raise the dead (Jn 5:28–29) and exercise judgment (Mt 25:31–32). The Olivet discourse, Jesus' teaching about the crisis of the present and the judgment to come (Mk 13; Mt 24–25; Lk 21), conveys a sense of urgency and imminence. And Matthew's account of the signs accompanying Jesus' crucifixion (darkness, earthquake, raisings of the dead—Mt 27:45, 51–53) surely communicates the conviction that this event signaled the coming of the last days.

On the basis of Jesus' life and teaching, his death and resurrection, and the experience of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost

(which was perceived as an evidence that the last days had come—Acts 2:14–21), the early church lived under the intense conviction that the final chapter of the scroll of history was being unrolled.

Paul shared this conviction. In his correspondence with the Christians in Thessalonica, he expresses his hope regarding the nearness of the Lord's return (1 Thess 4:13–14) but also reminds them that his return will be preceded by a time of tribulation, the evidence of evil's last struggle to retain control of the world (2 Thess 2). In the cross, the principalities and powers are defeated (Col 2:15). Jesus' resurrection is the downpayment, the first fruits, of the resurrection to come (1 Cor 15:2–23). And because the era of resurrection has already been inaugurated, believers are those who have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col 1:13); they are those on whom the end of the ages has come (1 Cor 10:11). At the same time, believers are participants in the final end-time struggle against the powers of evil (Eph 6:10–18).

Against the background of this world-view and within the context of these convictions about living in the last days, Paul's language about "the present crisis" and "the time is short" must be understood. His counsel to the various groups addressed in 1 Corinthians 7 "to remain" in their present relational and institutional contexts, and in those contexts to "live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord" (1 Cor 7:35), is eminently appropriate. Life can no longer be lived in its normal, ordinary way, "for this world in its present form is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31).

This conviction about the transitional nature of the present determines Paul's thinking about the various arenas of life in 1 Corinthians 7:29–31. Christians are "new creations" (2 Cor 5:17), and even though they are still living in this world they are no longer of this world (see Jn 17:15–16), but already part of a new order ("the old has gone, the new has come," 2 Cor 5:17). Therefore, "from now on those who have wives should live as if they had none." This statement is followed by four more "as if" contrasts, representative of various areas of life and work and relationships. The point Paul makes is simply that all of life—in light of the fact that Christians are already people of the new creation and that the old order is therefore no longer determinative—must be lived in a new key.

In contrast to the Corinthian spiritualists who wanted to reject marriage, Paul affirms it, but the values and priorities of persons living in this and other human institutions must be kingdom values. There is a higher loyalty than even that to one another in the covenant of marriage. The ordinary structures and expectations which are part of this present order of things—such as the use of power and status to subject others, whether in marriage or social arrangements like slavery—are no longer valid and determinative. Christians are members of a new order while still living in the final days of the old order. And so they should live "as if" the new order had already arrived. And in that new order, even divinely ordained institutions like marriage will be radically transformed.

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## A CALENDAR AND A WASTEBASKET

"... brethren, the time is short." 1 Corinthians 7:29

It was the last day of the month. Taking my desk calendar and reviewing the engagements fulfilled, the projects accomplished, and the obligations met, I tore it from the pad, rolled it up into a wad and threw it into the wastebasket. As I did so, however, I was arrested with the thought: that which I'm disposing of represents an entire month of my life. Have I been faithful in accomplishing that which the Lord has given me to do during those days? Were those precious minutes and hours utilized in the very best way? Or could it be that time has been squandered, opportunities disregarded, and the minutes wasted? Could it be possible that the month itself had been spent in such a way that God considered it fit only for the "wastebasket" of broken vows and dead works?

Frequently we categorize our misdemeanors, putting some down as greater than others. If we are at all justified in doing this, I believe one of the worst sins on the list is that of wasting time. Those hours, minutes, and seconds which are given to us must be considered as a treasured trust. They must not be wasted nor put to improper use, for they can never be recalled. On various occasions I have been startled by the sudden realization that the immediate, passing seconds would soon be beyond recall. This particular moment which is mine right now will never come again. Each passing second slips away, never to return. Especially Christians, who believe the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and that we are living in the midnight hour of this age, should endeavor to spend every day in pursuits which are profitable and which glorify God.

Yes, another month is gone! It's time to tear that current page from the calendar and throw it into the wastebasket. May that act, however, not characterize the quality of its activity. Rather than throwing away the months, let us give them to the Lord.

Don't just count days, make the days count; for "lost time" is never "found" again!

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## Phillip Brooks - Brethren, the time is short.—I Cor. 7:29.

Life as a part, life set upon the background of eternity, life recognized as the temporary form of that whose substance is everlasting, that is short; we wait for, we expect its end. And remember that to the Christian the interpretation of all this is in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore." The earthly life set against the eternal life,

the incorporate earthly form uttering here for a time the everlasting and essential being, those years shut in out of the eternities between the birth and the ascension, that resurrection opening the prospect of the life that never was to end,—these are the never failing interpretation to the man who believes in them of the temporal and eternal in his own experience.

Does the precept run "Believe in Good,  
In Justice, Truth, now understood  
For the first time"?—or, "Believe in Me,  
Who lived and died, yet essentially  
Am Lord of Life"?  
Browning

**1 Corinthians 7:30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess;**

Amplified And those who weep and mourn as though they were not weeping and mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they did not possess anything,

Wuest and those who are weeping be as though they are not weeping, and those who are rejoicing as though not rejoicing, and those who are purchasing in the market place as though they did not possess anything, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:30 those with tears like those not weeping, those who rejoice like those not rejoicing, those who buy like those without possessions,

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:30 Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods,

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:30 those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep;

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:30 κα ο κλαοντες ς μ κλαοντες κα ο χαροντες ς μ χαροντες κα ο γορζοντες ς μ κατχοντες,

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:30 and those weeping, as not weeping; and those rejoicing, as not rejoicing; and those buying, as not possessing;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:30 and those that weep, as though they wept not; and those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those that buy, as though they possessed not;

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions,

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:30 those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning,

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning; those who enjoy life as though they did not enjoy it; those who have been buying property as though they had no possessions;

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:30 Those who have eyes filled with tears should live as though they have no sorrow. Those who are happy should live as though there was nothing to be happy about. Those who buy something should live as though they didn't own it.



BBE 1 Corinthians 7:30 And for those who are in sorrow, to give no signs of it; and for those who are glad, to give no signs of joy; and for those who are getting property, to be as if they had nothing;

- **weep**: Ps 30:5 Ps 126:5,6 Ec 3:4 Isa 25:8 30:19 Lu 6:21,25 16:25 Joh 16:22 Rev 7:17 18:7
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Ecclesiastes 3:4 A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance. [Turn, Turn, Turn](#) by the Byrds - not bad theology!

**Guzik** - A **time is short attitude** will also not indulge the feelings and things of this world. Weeping, rejoicing, and having possessions must not get in the way of following hard after Jesus.

**And those who** (present tense - continually) **weep, as though they did not** (present tense - continually) **weep; and those who** (present tense - continually) **rejoice, as though they did not** (present tense - continually) **rejoice** - Keep the context in mind. All of these are to be practiced in light of the fact that **the time has been shortened**.

**MacArthur** "With our emphasis on celebration and happiness it is also easy for believers to get carried away with rejoicing over those things that pass away. A personal success, an inheritance, or a business promotion sometimes excites us more than a spiritual victory. Even when we give the Lord credit for the blessing, we can lose our perspective and be controlled more by our emotions than by our good judgment and spiritual priorities.

**Stephen Armstrong** - This principle of serving Christ free from divided attention extends far beyond the restrictions of marriage ◦ In v.30, Paul says we cannot allow the sorrows and disappointments of this life to become excuse for not serving God. In Paul's day, Christians often experienced the sorrow of losing a loved one to persecution or suffering economic distress for their faith. Paul says if we have such sorrows, we must continue serving Christ as if we have only joys

**Arnold** has a good explanation of these somewhat confusing statements - Paul's advice is that it is not good to get wrapped up in the affairs of this world which will hinder our fellowship with Christ and our obedience **to God's will. Weeping, rejoicing and buying are all legitimate and necessary aspects of life, but the highest good is one's service to Jesus Christ. There are multitudes of Christians who had real spiritual zeal for Christ in their single state who after marriage became bogged down** with children, home, jobs, paying bills, material concerns or whatever and lost that zeal. Surely marriage and children will change our zeal for service to Christ to some degree, **but we must never let marriage kill our zeal for Christ** (LET IT NOT HAPPEN LORD. AMEN!)

**Poole** on **rejoice as though they did not rejoice** - for any of those who rejoiced in any worldly enjoyments, the shortness of the time (1 Cor 7:29) they are like to have them to rejoice in, should admonish them to govern and moderate their joy, for it is like to be but like the crackling of thorns under a pot.

**Ironside** - The apostle says, "Whatever you do, keep in mind that you are here for only a little while, and you are here to glorify God and that is far more important than to seek your own happiness. You are living in difficult times, in perplexing days, but your hope is the Lord's near return." This is always the blessed hope for the Christian, and they were to live with that in view.... In other words, we are not to allow any temporal relationship or any human occupation to hinder our fellowship with God or our obedience to His will....The causes of **weeping** will soon be over and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. It does not say that you must not weep; but if you do, it is to be as though you wept not. Who are the folk who weep not? They are the happy people; and though you weep you can be joyful, even in the midst of sorrow, if you are looking on to the glad day of the Lord's return. ([Ironside](#))

**and those who** (present tense - continually) **buy, as though they did not** (present tense - continually) **possess** - Use but don't abuse possessions! Paul is saying yes possess possessions but don't let possessions possess you, especially in view of the fact that **the time has been shortened** (1 Cor 7:29). Hold your possessions loosely (after all they are not really YOURS but the LORD'S!) We have only today to live for the Lord and do His Kingdom assignment (and each of us has an assignment - e.g., each has a good work as Eph 2:10+ says and each has a spiritual gift in 1 Pe 4:10+ which they need to steward well because one day they will give an account to the Master - 2 Cor 5:10+). **Wesley** adds regarding possessions "Knowing themselves to be only stewards, not proprietors."

**John Trapp** - A right believer (saith Mr Ward) goes through the world as a man whose mind is in a deep study; or as one that hath special haste of some weighty business. Be not wholly dulled or drowned in the world; look at it out of the eyes' end only, lest, as the serpent **Scytale (Scitalis)**, it bewitch us with its beautiful colours, and sting us to death.

**Matthew Poole** - those that have liberal possessions of good things in this life, they should look upon them as none of theirs, and

use them as not like to be their possessions long.

**Ironside** - You cannot get through this world without buying; it is impossible to live in this scene without something for physical comfort as you go along. But do not set your heart upon such possessions, do not let your affections be entwined about earthly things. As you go through this world it is perfectly right and proper to enjoy many privileges: "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy"; "and they that use this world, as not abusing it." In other words, do not let the spirit of the world get hold of you. While enjoying the good things that God in His grace lavishes upon you do not set your heart upon them, for they are all fleeting, they will be gone someday. If your treasure is all here, if your heart is set upon things here, when everything here has disappeared, what will you have left? If you have Christ, you will have that which satisfies the soul when everything else is gone. ([Ironside](#))

**Possess** (hold fast) ([2722](#)) **katecho** from **katá** = intensifies meaning + **écho** = have, hold) means to retain whether by avoiding the relinquishing of something. Paul uses **katecho** with the meaning of or keep in possession in 1 Cor 7:30 and 2 Cor 6:10 "as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet **possessing** all things." Robertson writes "Paul means that all earthly relations are to hang loosely about us in view of the second coming." Katecho was used literally of holding one to keep them from going (Luke 4:42+). **Katecho** was used figuratively with the idea of restraining or keeping someone (Antichrist) from exercising power (see 2Th 2:6-7+). A closely related figurative use of **katecho** means to hold down or suppress as the ungodly do to the truth about God (see note Romans 1:18+). One NT use of **katecho** means to take over or occupy, to have a place as one's own or to take into one's possession. (see Lk 14:9+).

**Katecho** - 18v - Lk. 4:42; Lk. 8:15; Lk. 14:9; Jn. 5:4; Acts 27:40; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 7:6; 1 Co. 7:30; 1 Co. 11:2; 1 Co. 15:2; 2 Co. 6:10; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Thess. 2:6; 2 Thess. 2:7; Phlm. 1:13; Heb. 3:6; Heb. 3:14; Heb. 10:23

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#### Patrick Morley - MATERIALISM: DIVIDED INTERESTS 1 Cor 7:30-31

Webster's Dictionary defines materialism as, "the theory that physical well-being and worldly possessions constitute the highest value and greatest good in life." Is that true? Do comfort and belongings mark what's most important to us? Of course not. Yet we must confess that, although we wish it weren't true, our lives often reveal that materialism has hold of us.

Two things occur when we reflect on this. First, we see ourselves all too clearly. Second, the Word commands us not to let the blemishes of the world stain our soul. Why? "For this world in its present form is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). God wants us to live for the world that is coming, not for the world that is going.

I can recall so vividly the days of my unbridled materialism. I wanted to be a Biblical Christian, but I was so engrossed in my own worldly affairs that I simply did not penetrate the spiritual life deeply, even though I sincerely wanted to. Do you see the trap? We can congratulate ourselves for our good intentions while continuing to live a secular lifestyle, believing intentions are as good as actions.

Truth be known, many of us live more for the world that is going than the world that is coming. It takes time, lots of time, to manage all the "things" we accumulate. Time, in the final analysis, is the ultimate resource. Where are you spending your time? Pleasing God, or managing your assets? The Lord says, "I would like you to be free from concern." (1 Corinthians 7:32). Is that the record of our calendar and checkbook?

Only a unique person could climb the corporate ladder all day, be absorbed in worldly affairs, and then slow down to the pace of Jesus. Here's the problem: We all tend to think we are that unique person. We are the one who can do it; we can manage to maximize two worlds. We cannot.

We can only maximize one world. We will be engrossed in the affairs of this world, or we will be engrossed in how to please the Lord. "No one can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24, emphasis added). Do you see it? According to the Word of God, there are no unique people. No one can pull it off, but we always think we can. It is time for some of us to confront our own materialism. Have you been trying to maximize two worlds? Have you tried to serve two masters?

The action plan is hard. It is simple, but hard. You must surrender all the things you have bought and every worldly thing you are using to the Lord. "Those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them."

He may let you keep some or all of your things; He may increase them. Or He may prune you back to a useful level. If you listen to His leading, He will clarify His desire for you. If you don't listen, He will gain your attention in other ways. He works in our lives regardless of our level of cooperation, but surrender produces the most fruit.

We must adjust our lifestyles until they offer a viable alternative—an alternative of hope—to the confused and broken world all around us, a world that is passing away. Give what you don't need to the work of Christ. Devote time to loving one another. And

remember that the time is short. Live for the world that is coming, not for the world that is going. "For this world in its present form is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31).

I SURRENDER Heavenly Father, I confess that too much of my life has been spent on comfort and belongings. Show me how to maximize my spiritual life. Give me the courage to recant my materialism. I want my lifestyle to speak for itself. Help me to live for the world that is coming and not for the world that is going. Amen. (Devotions for Man in the Mirror)

### 1 Corinthians 7:31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

Amplified And those who deal with this world overusing the enjoyments of this life] as though they were not absorbed by it and as if they had no dealings with it. For the outward form of this world (the present world order) is passing away

Wuest and those who are making use of this world [the things of human existence] as not making excessive use of the same, for the temporary fashion of this world is passing away. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:31 those who use the world as though they were not using it to the full. For the present shape of this world is passing away.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:31 Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:31 those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:31 κα ο χρ μενοι τ ν κ σμον ς μ καταχρ μενοι παρ χει γ ρ τ σχ μα το κ σμου το του.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:31 and those using this world, as not using it up; for passing away is the fashion of this world.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:31 and those that use the world, as not using it to the full: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:31 and those who use the world as though they did not make full use of it. For this world in its current form is passing away.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:31 those using the world as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:31 and those who are involved with the world as though they were people not engrossed in it. Because this world as we know it is passing away.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:31 Those who use the things in this world should do so but not depend on them. It is clear that this world in its present form is passing away.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:31 And for those who make use of the world, not to be using it fully; for this world's way of life will quickly come to an end.

- **use:** 1Co 9:18 Ec 2:24,25 3:12,13 5:18-20 9:7-10 11:2,9,10 Mt 24:48-50 Mt 25:14-29 Lu 12:15-21 16:1,2 19:17-26 21:34 1Ti 6:17,18 Jas 5:1-5
- **for:** Ps 39:6 Ps 73:20 Ec 1:4 Jas 1:10,11 4:14 1Pe 1:24 4:7 1Jn 2:17

- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## POSSESSIONS ARE PASSING AWAY

Beloved, this is one of those ["gut check"](#) passages (of which there are many), which challenges each of us to do a personal, internal audit/inventory. What is most important to us in this short life? Am I spending time (and money) on those things which will impact my joy forever in eternity or am I spending time (money) on those things which will vanish forever? I am asking myself (you can join me if you want).

**And those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it- NLT** = "Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away." **ICB** - "Those who use the things of the world should live as if those things are not important to them. You should live like this, because this world, the way it is now, will soon be gone." Live in the world (for that we must all do), but do not fall in love with the world (that we should not do!)

Every lifestyle decision we make will impact our obedience to the Lord....  
Every decision we make for where we spend our time, money and energy means something else is losing out.

--S Armstrong

**Stephen Armstrong** - y, if we are living in luxury and comfort, we cannot allow the pursuit or maintenance of such things stand in the way of serving Christ. Remember the words of Christ Matt. 19:21-22 "Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property." We cannot allow any affections in this life, whether family comforts or lifestyle, become an excuse to ignore the call of the Lord. Every lifestyle decision we make will impact our obedience to the Lord. (ED:READ THAT ONE AGAIN!) If our spouse demands we provide a certain degree of comfort or lifestyle, it will constrain our ability to serve the Lord. If we are determined to provide an expensive education for our kids or to live in only the best neighborhood, we'll be forced to pursue certain jobs. If we value our lifestyle over sacrificially serving the Lord, we'll spend our energy and free time on the wrong things. Every decision we make for where we spend our time, money and energy means something else is losing out. And when we're married, some of our time, money and energy must be spent on our spouse and children, as it should be. We remember that Paul emphasized that this choice is not sin. We have every right to take a spouse and have a family. And if we do, then we must give them the required time and attention. But neither should we be naive about how this choice impacts our service to Christ. And Paul, speaking from experience, counsels that we give some consideration to the possibility that our life will best serve the Lord if we remain free of such distractions

**Arnold** - The King James Version says, "**And they that use this world, as not abusing it**" Christians must learn how to live in the world and yet not be an intimate part of the world system. The things of the **world** should never **engross** (means to involve, immerse, engage; to occupy completely) and possess the Christian to the point that he or she is unable to serve Jesus Christ. The things of the **world** are temporary, transitory and are **passing away**. They have absolutely no eternal value. That which is of eternal value is service for Jesus Christ (ED: cf Eph 2:10+, 1 Cor 15:58+ = "knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."). Success in business is not the greatest aim of life and should never be allowed to be so for a believer because the fame and the glory of the world is **passing away**. Surely there is more to Christianity than owning a lovely home, slaving for a retirement plan and cramming our twilight years with a few activities we may enjoy before we die. Christians, if we do not have the time to get all the worthwhile enjoyments and pleasures here and now, we will have lots of time to get them in eternity. **What awaits us Christians in the future is so incredible that to give ourselves fully to the pursuit of the things of God here is much more intelligent than to waste our whole existence on secondary levels of activity and involvement.**

For ([gar](#)) term of explanation. Paul gives us a good reason to hold the things of this present world loosely!

**ESV Study Bible** - Paul's point here is simply that the **form of this world**, or its day-to-day affairs, is not eternal. Christians should prioritize their human relationships, material possessions, and worldly dealings accordingly. See also Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-30; Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:16-17.

**Leon Morris** - There is nothing solid and lasting in this world system; it is its nature to pass away. It is folly for believers to act as though its values were permanent." (Morris)

**The form of this world is passing away** - I like the NLT paraphrase "this world as we know it" is **passing away** which is in the

present tense indicating the **world** even now is fading into the sunset (so to speak).

The **Apostle John** said it this way

**"Do not love present imperative with a negative** see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) the **world** ([kosmos](#)) nor the things in the **world** ([kosmos](#)) . If anyone loves (present tense = habitually, continually) the **world** ([kosmos](#)), the love of the Father is (absolutely) not in him. 16 For all that is in the **world** ([kosmos](#)) , the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the **world** ([kosmos](#)) 17 The **world** ([kosmos](#)) is **passing away** ([parago](#) in present tense), and also its lusts; but the one who **does** (present tense = habitually, continually) the will of God lives forever. " (1 John 2:15-17+)

**Form** (fashion) ([4976](#)) **schema** English "scheme") refers purely outward and appeals to the senses. Here it refers to the fashion, manner, way of a thing. **Schema** always refers to what may be known from without about a person or thing; (1) of persons outward appearance, form, bearing (Php 2.7); (2) of a way of life (distinctive) form, nature, present scheme of things (1Co 7.31) BDAG - 1. the generally recognized state or form in which someth. appears, outward appearance, form, shape 2. the functional aspect of someth., way of life, of things

**World** ([2889](#)) **kosmos** related to the verb **kosmeo** = to order or adorn, to put in order [Mt 25:7 = "trimmed"], to adorn literally [1Ti 2:9], to adorn figuratively [Titus 2:9+] means essentially something that is well-arranged, that which has order or something arranged harmoniously. **Kosmos** refers to an ordered system or a system where order prevails. As explained below however, **kosmos** as used here in James 4:4+ and many places in the NT, takes on a considerably more negative shade of meaning. **Kosmos** in the Corinthians letters -1 Co. 1:20; 1 Co. 1:21; 1 Co. 1:27; 1 Co. 1:28; 1 Co. 2:12; 1 Co. 3:19; 1 Co. 3:22; 1 Co. 4:9; 1 Co. 4:13; 1 Co. 5:10; 1 Co. 6:2; 1 Co. 7:31; 1 Co. 7:33; 1 Co. 7:34; 1 Co. 8:4; 1 Co. 11:32; 1 Co. 14:10; 2 Co. 1:12; 2 Co. 5:19; 2 Co. 7:10;

**Passing away** ([3855](#)) **parago** from **para** = beside, by + **ago** = lead) means literally to pass alongside or to pass by. Thus in the present context **parago** means essentially to go out of existence or cease to exist.

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**Spurgeon** - This world is fading away! Hate the world, value its treasure at a cheap price, estimate its gems as nothing but fakes, and its strength as nothing but dreams. Do not think that you will lose any pleasure, but rather remember the saying of that early Church leader Chrysostom ... "Despise riches, and you will be rich; despise glory, and you will be glorious; despise injuries, and you will be a conqueror; despise rest, and you will gain rest; despise the earth, and you will gain heaven!"

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**J C Ryle** - The possession of the whole world, and all that it contains — will never make a person happy. Its pleasures are false and deceptive! Its riches, rank, and honors, have no power to satisfy the heart! So long as we have not got them — they glitter, sparkle, and seem desirable. The moment we have them — we find that they are empty bubbles, and cannot make us feel content. And, worst of all, when we possess this world's good things to the utmost bound of our desire — we cannot keep them! Death comes in and separates us from all our property forever! Naked we came upon earth, and naked we go forth — and of all our possessions, we can carry nothing with us. Such is the world, which occupies the whole attention of thousands! Such is the world, for the sake of which millions are every year destroying their souls!

R E Neighbour -

"The fashion (the stage scenery) of this world passeth away." (I Cor. 7:31.)

The world is filled with frailties,  
With failures and uncertainties,  
With changing, effervescent things,  
With transient, fragile, shatterings,  
'Mid these I see a Rock:  
A Rock both stable and secure,  
A Rock that shall for aye endure,  
The Rock of Ages cleft for me,  
Unshaken through eternity.  
I would not be a theorist,  
A flaunting, flaring rhapsodist,  
Moved by each changing wind that blows,

Swept by each wave that overflows:  
My heart demands a Rock:  
A sure Foundation, heaven-laid,  
Where I can build all undismayed,  
Where all my hopes shall safe remain  
Though swept by flood, and wind, and rain.

EVERYTHING about us is dying. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth." Things of earth have within themselves the germs of death. The poet wrote, "Change and decay in all around I see." We get, only to lose. We build, only to tear down. Everything we touch is transient, effervescent, uncertain, frail, and changing.

Amid all of these uncertainties, and the crumbling things of this life, how wonderful it is to find a Rock, more stable than Gibraltar, a Rock that shall never fail, and never fall; a sure foundation upon which we may build.

The Word of God is a Rock that shall never fail. It tells us that treasures laid up in heaven are laid where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through to steal.

The things of time are the things which collapse.  
I longed for something certain, and made sure  
Where I could say, "I know," and feel secure;  
A hope that would forevermore endure,  
A solid rock:  
I found that Rock was Jesus Christ, the Lord,  
The only Rock that safety can accord,  
Impregnable it stands 'gainst Satan's horde  
And tempest shock.

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**F. W. Robertson** - The spirit of the world is forever altering, impalpable; forever eluding, in fresh forms, your attempts to seize it. In the days of Noah, the spirit of the world was violence. In Elijah's day, it was idolatry. In the day of Christ, it was power, concentrated and condensed in the government of Rome. In ours, perhaps, it is the love of money. It enters in different proportions into different bosoms; it is found in a different form in contiguous towns, in the fashionable watering-places, and in the commercial city; it is this thing at Athens, and another in Corinth. This is the spirit of the world, a thing in my heart and yours to be struggled against, not so much in the case of others as in the silent battle done within our own souls.

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Eugene Peterson, a well-known pastor and author, has a saying: "Lord, teach us to care and not to care." When I first heard him say it, I found it hard to understand; but the above verse could easily be summed up by his statement.

Saint Paul is writing to a church, urging them to keep their eyes focused on Jesus and eternity. We are not to get so wrapped up in the emotions, relationships and stuff of this world that we lose the next world. "Teach us to care and not to care." Teach us, Lord, to be your people regardless of the condition we find ourselves in: married or single, sad or happy, rich or poor.

Paul said it another way in Philippians 4:11-12: "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."

Can we say the same thing? Can we care about people and situations and material possessions in a way that doesn't allow them to possess us? The discipline of simplicity invites us to this kind of freedom. (Valerie Hess)

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### **Gregg Laurie - AFTERWORD**

Just about everything I can think of in this world of ours has its limits: wealth, time, wisdom, opportunities, even physical life itself.

Paul wrote: "For this world in its present form is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). John declared: "And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave" (1 John 2:17, NLT).

But I'll tell you one thing in my experience that has no limits at all.

It's God's Word. In one Bible paraphrase, the psalmist declares: "I see the limits to everything human, but the horizons can't contain your commands!" (Psalm 119:96, The Message).



No matter how many times I read a passage of Scripture, there's always something new, something I'd never seen or considered before, some fresh Word from the Lord. It's like peeling an onion, finding layer after layer—only the onion never grows smaller. With the Holy Spirit as our Guide and Teacher as we read and study the Word, we will never exhaust its wisdom, beauty, and good counsel. No one will. Not ever.

This devotional is just one more example of that truth. I have dipped into the Word here and there, bringing up questions, insights, and encouragements for life. And the desire of my heart is that these daily pages will simply whet your appetite for more and more and more. Sometimes you may find yourself with limited time and can only read a little. At other times, you'll want to lose yourself in the depths, immersing your heart in truth.

Either way, the Lord will speak to you, help you, sometimes warn you, but always draw you close to Himself.

So the way I see it, you may be finishing a devotional, but the whole Bible still lays before you...infinite in its wisdom, because it was inspired, word for word, by our infinite God.

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**William Wilberforce** - How can we go on as if present things were to last for ever, when so often reminded "that the fashion of this world passes away"? Every day I live I see greater reason in considering this life but as a passage to another. And when summoned to the tribunal of God, to give an account of all things we have done in the body, how shall we be confounded by the recollection of those many instances, in which we have relinquished a certain eternal for an uncertain transitory good! You are not insensible to these things, but you think of them rather like a follower of Socrates than a disciple of Jesus. You see how frankly I deal with you, in truth I can no otherwise so well show the interest I take in your happiness.

FOR MEDITATION: The seventeenth-century preacher and writer Richard Baxter once wrote: 'I preached ... as a dying man to dying men.' Present things will not last forever; and so we must give care to matters of eternity.

In 1745 Philip Doddridge, a man much like Baxter, crafted a prayer that puts the things of eternity in perspective. It is the prayer of one who has come to see that this life is but as a passage to another: '

Gracious Father! I would not quit this earth of thine, without my grateful acknowledgments to thee for all that abundant goodness which thou hast caused to pass before me here. I thank thee, O my God! that this guilty, forfeited, unprofitable life, was so long spared; that it hath still been maintained by such a rich variety of thy bounty.

'I bless thee, O Lord! that I am not dying in an unregenerate and impenitent state; but that thou didst graciously awaken and convince me, that thou didst renew and sanctify my heart, and didst, by thy good Spirit, work in it an unfeigned faith, a real repentance, and the beginning of a divine life. Permit me to consign "this departing spirit to thine hand; for thou hast redeemed it O Lord God of truth!" '

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### **Horatius Bonar - A VANISHING WORLD**

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as thou they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 COR. 7:29–31.

IN the midst of counsels and exhortations about the relationships of life, the apostle stops abruptly, and interposes an emphatical announcement bearing upon all these relationships, "but this I say, brethren," as if lifting up his voice more loudly, and interrupting the line of discourse, by the proclamation of these three parenthetical verses, a proclamation importing this, "but after all brethren, these are but the little things of earth, the transient and temporary arrangements of our brief life below; let them not be exalted or magnified beyond their due; they are but the arrangements of a day; not to have any stress laid on them or importance attached to them, seeing they shall so soon end, and the world of which they form a part shall so speedily vanish away."

Mark (1) the two special truths which begin and end this emphatic announcement; (2) the conclusions to be drawn from these.

I. The two special truths. For we take the commencing and concluding declarations as linked together; forming either one great and solemn truth or two kindred truths, bearing both on certain duties and on our estimate of the importance of the things of our daily life. These must be measured by the shortness of time, and the length of eternity.

(1.) The time is short. It is cut short or contracted; it is the time referred to by our Lord (Rom. 13:12) "the night is far spent," or "foreshortened." It is short for (1) So much is already spent and little remains; (2) Our individual life is brief, even at the longest; (3) The world's history is drawing to a close; (4) The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Truly the time is short; and each ending year and setting sun says to us, "the time is short," it is

becoming shorter and shorter. "What is our life? It is but a vapour" (James 4:4). "Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6). "Man that is born of a woman is of few days; he cometh forth as a flower and is cut down, he fleeth as a shadow and continueth not" (Job 14:1-2). "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7).

(2.) The fashion of this world passeth away. The outward form, or scene, or figure of this world is passing, or or is just about to pass away. This "fashion" is what the Apostle John refers to in warning us against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life (or glorying in the good things of life); and of this he says "the world passeth away." Yes; like a flower; like a mist; like a shadow; like a dream; like a rainbow; like a vision of the night it passeth away; that which we admire in it, and call beautiful, that which men have all along been fascinated by, its glory, its pomp, its glitter, its splendour, its gaiety, its beauty and excellency and grandeur, shall pass away; its songs, and jests, and mirth, and ringing laughter; its shows, its spectacles, its concerts, its balls, its theatres, its operas, with all its haunts of uncleanness and debauchery, its revellings, and banquetings, surfeitings and idolatries of the flesh, all shall pass away. These are not enduring things. Even at their best and purest they are the things of an hour. They fade as a leaf. They are crushed as a flower. They die away like the breeze. A short life is that of the world at its longest; shorter still that of the men of the world; and shortest of all is the frail and shifting fashion of the world. Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!

II. The lessons to be drawn from them. The substance of these lessons is that all earthly things are of minor moment, and ought not to be lifted out of their place, so as to engross us too much, or to be estimated at too high a rate. They are not eternal. They vanish with a vanishing world, and ought to be estimated accordingly. The seen and the corporeal never can be placed beside the unseen and the eternal.

(1.) Earthly relationships are of lesser moment. "It remaineth (or "henceforth" during the contracted space that is left) that both they who have wives, be as though they had none." The nearest human relationship will soon be dissolved; the closest earthly tie will soon be snapt. Let us not then over-estimate it, or give it undue prominence. Let us keep even it, in its proper place. It is, after all, among the things that are seen and temporal. Husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister, child, will soon remove; and each soul, unrelatoned, unlinked with others, pass from earth alone, into the presence of God.

(2.) Earthly sorrows are of lesser moment. Sorrow is in itself no trifle. Tears are real things. We do not weep for nothing; nor shall we find that a needless piece of kindness that God shall do for us, when He shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Still tears are among the things seen and temporal. They are unknown in heaven. Our weeping time is so short, that we must not make too much of time's sorrows. The vale of tears is not a long one. We shall soon be beyond it; and we shall wonder why we gave way to a sadness that was so soon to end, and to be exchanged for the perfect gladness and the everlasting song.

(3.) Earthly joys are of lesser moment. Joy is a real thing. Our hearts were made for gladness. We ought not to despise joy; nor indeed can we afford to do it. We are warranted in making much of joy; only let it not be too much. Let us keep our joys in their proper place; calmly taking them when they come, or as calmly foregoing them when they come not. For the time is short, and the joys we have here will soon be done. The fashion of this world passeth away; let us not then overvalue joy; but take it as if we had it not; sitting tranquilly loose to all that we can gain or lose.

(4.) Earthly business is of lesser moment. Our buying and selling will soon be done. Our merchandize will ere long disappear, for it is part of the fashion of that world which passeth away. Let us be diligent in business, but let us not overrate its importance, nor be engrossed by it. We shall soon buy no more; and sell no more; and make gain no more; and possess no more. Why so eager in business, as if it were eternal? Why so anxious to lay up treasure on earth, where the moth will corrupt it, and the thief break through and steal? Is it worth our while to be so much in earnest about the things that perish with the using?

(5.) Earthly gratifications are of lesser moment. They that use this world as not abusing it (or rather, "as not using it at all"). We must use this world while we are in it; we must use its meat, and drink, and raiment; its comforts, its money, its friendships, its necessary recreations, and gratifications. But we are to sit loose from all these; not setting our heart upon them; but holding them as if letting them go, using them as if not using them. They are not sinful, and need not, therefore, be rejected; but they must be kept in their proper place, not coveted nor idolized. For the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away. Let the world be no world to us, in comparison of the glory and beauty, the magnitude and the eternity, of the world to come.

Thus, then, is our whole earthly life, in all its parts, to be regulated by the magnitude of the eternal. Things present must be subordinated to those which are to come, the seen to the unseen, the earthly to the heavenly. It is by the light of the coming glory that we must walk while here. It is from the clock of eternity that our time is to be always taken. Arrange your business, your

recreations, your duties with reference to the invisible and unending future. Live, speak, work, move, as those who believe that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (Light and Truth)

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**Horatius Bonar - IF WE WOULD AIM AT a holy and useful life, let us learn to redeem time.** "I am large about redeeming time," says Richard Baxter in the preface to his Christian Directory, "because therein the sum of a holy, obedient life is included." Yes; "let us redeem the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5). A wasted life is the result of unredeemed time. Desultory working, impulsive giving, fitful planning, irregular reading, ill-assorted hours, perfunctory or unpunctual execution of business, hurry and bustle, loitering and unreadiness - these, and such like, are the things that take the power from life, hinder holiness, and eat like a canker into our moral being. Misuse of time makes success and progress an impossibility, either in things temporal or spiritual.

There needs not to be routine, but there must be regularity; there ought not to be mechanical stiffness, but there must be order; there may not be haste, but there must be no trifling with our own time or that of others; "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). If the thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well; and, in little things as well as great, we must show that we are in earnest. There must be no idling, but a girding up of the loins; a running the race with patience; the warring of a good warfare. The call is to be "steadfast and . . . always abounding in the work of the Lord."

The flowers are constant in their growing, the stars are constant in their courses; the rivers are constant in the flowing - they lose not time. So must our life be, not one of fits, or starts, or random impulses, not one of levity or inconstancy, or fickle scheming, but steady and resolute. We must be resolute men and women, those who know their earthly mission and have their eye upon the heavenly goal.

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### **J C Ryle - I WILL COME AGAIN**

The time is short. I CORINTHIANS 7:29

THE WORDS OF THE ANGELS shall have a complete fulfillment: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). As His going away was a literal going away, so his return shall be a literal return. As He came personally the first time with a body, so He shall come personally the second time with a body. As He came visibly to this earth and visibly went away, so when he comes the second time He shall visibly return. And then, and not till then, the complete kingdom of Christ shall begin. He left His servants as "a nobleman"; He returns to His servants as "a king."

Then He intends to cast out that old usurper the devil, to bind him for a thousand years, and to strip him of his power.

Then He intends to make a restitution of the face of creation. It shall be the world's jubilee day. Our earth shall at last bring forth her increase. The King shall at length have His own again. At last the ninety-seventh psalm shall be fulfilled, and men shall say, "The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice!"

Then He intends to fulfill the prophecies of Enoch, John the Baptist, and St. Paul, "To execute judgement upon all the ungodly" inhabitants of Christendom - "to bum up the chaff with unquenchable fire" - and "in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel."

Then He intends to raise His dead saints and gather His living ones, to gather together the scattered tribes of Israel, and to set up an empire on earth in which every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord.

When, how, where, in what manner, all these things shall be, we cannot say particularly. Enough for us to know that they shall be.

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**P G Matthew** - The world in its present form is passing away and will soon be gone forever. Thanks be to God, though we are in this world, we are not of this world; we are of the world to come. We are of God, and we belong to the kingdom of God. Every person who is regenerated by the Holy Spirit is enabled to see and enter into the kingdom of God, which is described as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul writes that those who buy something should do so "as if it were not theirs to keep" (v. 30). Some have misinterpreted this to mean that owning private property is forbidden. But this is wrong thinking. Neither is Paul advocating divorce, celibacy, stoicism, or asceticism. Marrying, buying, selling, building, eating, drinking—these are all necessary and proper aspects of human life. So we have to ask the question: What is the apostle teaching?

Paul is telling us that we should not seek all these things as of first priority, as though this world is the final and most important reality. It is engrossment in these things that is prohibited in this chapter. God opposes such hungering, thirsting, and pursuing. Jesus said that "the pagans run after all these things" (Matt. 6:32). This is what unbelievers seek with all their heart. This is what they worship. They believe, "If I could only possess more things, then I could arrive at happiness." It is this idolatrous mindset that God is so

adamantly opposing.

We must study diligently and work hard so that we can make money. But that money is not finally ours; it is entrusted to us to use for God's purposes. All of us should examine our lives and ask whether we love God more than anything else in the world. We must love him more than our jobs, our money, our families, and even our own lives. We ought to develop a deep relationship with God now so that when we are called to heaven we will go eagerly and with great joy. We should be able to say, "I know someone already in heaven. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. I know him, because I have been walking closely with him in this world."

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**J C Philpot devotional on 1 Cor 7:31-** Nothing is real but that which has an abiding substance. Health decays, strength diminishes, beauty flees the cheek, sight and hearing grow dim, the mind itself gets feeble, riches make to themselves wings and flee away, children die, friends depart, old age creeps on, and life itself comes to a close. These fugitive, transitory things are then mere shadows; there is no substance, enduring substance in them. Like our daily food and clothing, house and home, they support and solace us in our journey through life. But there they stop; when life ends, they end with it.

But real religion--and by this I understand the work of God upon the soul--abides in death and after death, goes with us through the dark valley, and lands us safe in a blessed eternity. It is, therefore, the only thing in this world of which we can say that it is real. Is not this John's testimony? "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:16, 17).

And who is that man, that blessed man, who lives when all dies, who abides forever when all others pass away into the outer darkness? It is he who does the will of God. But how and when do we the will of God? "And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life--and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). If, then, you have seen the Son, and believed in him, you have now everlasting life, and Jesus will raise you up at the last day.

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**1 Corinthians 7:32 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;**

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Amplified My desire is to have you free from all anxiety and distressing care. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord;

Wuest But I desire you to be without anxious cares. He who is unmarried seeks to promote the interests of the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:32 And I want you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:32 I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:32 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:32 ἠλωδ μ ς μερ μους ε vai. γαμος μεριμν τ το κυρ ου, π ς ρ σ τ κυρ .

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:32 And I wish you to be without anxiety; the unmarried is anxious for the things of the Lord, how he shall please the Lord;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:32 But I would have you to be free from cares. He that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:32 I want you to be without concerns. An unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord-- how he may please the Lord.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:32 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord-- how he may please the Lord.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord;

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:32 I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:32 I should like you to have your minds free from all worry. The unmarried man gives his mind to the Lord's affairs and to how he can please the Lord;

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:32 So I don't want you to have any concerns. An unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord, that is, about how he can please the Lord.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:32 But it is my desire for you to be free from cares. The unmarried man gives his mind to the things of the Lord, how he may give pleasure to the Lord:

- **But I want you:** Ps 55:22 Mt 6:25-34 13:22 Php 4:6
- **One who is unmarried:** 1Ti 5:5
- **about the things of the Lord,** 1Co 7:34
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ANOTHER ADVANTAGE OF SINGLENESS

**But I want** ([thelo](#) in present tense) **you to be free from concern - Amplified** - "My desire is to have you free from all anxiety and distressing care." **Free from concern** is the rare word (here and Mt 28:14) **amerimnos** (a = negative + [merimna](#) = anxious care) means free from care or anxiety. Paul is speaking of concern one has for their spouse. So the advantage of singleness in times of distress is that it can lessen one's worry or concern, because the person does not have a spouse or children for which to be concerned.

I HAVE no cares, O blessed Will!  
For all my cares are Thine,  
I live in triumph, Lord, for Thou  
Hast made Thy triumphs mine.  
FREDERICK W. FABER.

**Warren Wiersbe** points out that "It is a fact of history that both John [Wesley](#) and [George Whitefield](#) might have been better off had they remained single—[Wesley's wife finally left him](#), and Whitefield traveled so much that his wife was often alone for long periods of time."

**Excerpt from [Whitefield's Curious Love Life click for full article](#)** - Whitefield had vowed that he "would not preach one sermon less in a married than in a single state." During the week-long honeymoon in Elizabeth's home, he preached twice a day. From then on, she usually remained in London during his travels. Once he was gone for two years. But the obligations of marriage couldn't help but constrain Whitefield's ministry. Within two months of his wedding, he wrote, "O for that blessed time when we shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but be as the angels of God." (Mt 22:30, Mk 12:25+) Years later he warned a young man, **"Marry when or whom you will, expect trouble in the flesh."** After Elizabeth's death, though, he said, "I feel the loss of my right hand daily." Elizabeth James's letters show it took her ten years to get over Harris. She suffered four miscarriages, and her only child with Whitefield, a son, died when 4 months old. A man who lived with the couple during their last years put it well: "He did not intentionally make his wife unhappy. He always preserved great decency and decorum in his conduct towards her."

LET my soul roll itself on Him, and adventure there all its weight.  
He bears greater matters, upholding the frame of heaven and earth, and is not troubled or burdened with it.  
-- Robert Leighton

**Arnold** - The third reason Paul says it is better to stay single is to be **free from concern** (anxiety). The single person has less to distract him or her from the service of the Lord. Singlehood makes possible a degree of dedication and devotion of commitment to the work of Christ that married life does not allow. The unmarried have the potential to wait upon the Lord without distractions. They can give the majority of their time and thought to the things of Jesus Christ.

The things that belong to men must be understood in order to be loved;  
the things that belong to God must be loved in order to be understood.

-- Pascal

**One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord-** The unmarried apparently includes widows and divorcees (cf 1 Cor 7:8+). Instead of pleasing one's earthly bride or groom, the single person can focus on pleasing our Heavenly Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Wiersbe** - It is possible to please both the Lord and your mate, if you are yielded to Christ and obeying the Word. Many of us have discovered that a happy home and satisfying marriage are a wonderful encouragement in the difficulties of Christian service. A well-known Scottish preacher was experiencing a great deal of public criticism because of a stand he took on a certain issue, and almost every day there was a negative report in the newspapers. A friend met him one day and asked, "How are you able to carry on in the face of this opposition?" The man replied quietly, "I am happy at home."

**Hiebert** comments that the believers goal should be to "live to **please** God. Such an aim for the Christian's endeavor is the logical outcome of his love for his Lord. It marks the service of freedom and gladness that characterizes the believer who has been released from the bondage of the law and has entered into the perfect law of Christian liberty."

**Concerned** (anxious) (3309) **merimnao** from **merimna** = anxious care from **meris** = part, in turn from **merizo** = to distract, to divide, to draw different directions - which is exactly what **anxiety** does to most of us!) expresses a strong feeling for something or someone, often to the point of being burdened. Although this can be a "positive" concern, in most of the NT uses it refers to an anxious concern, based on apprehension about possible danger or misfortune, and so it means to be worried about, to be anxious about, to be apprehensive (viewing the future with anxiety or alarm), to be unduly concerned, to be burdened with anxious care or cumbered with many cares and in simple terms to **worry**.

**Please** (700) **aresko** from **airo** = through the idea of raising up, elevating or exciting emotion - not everyone agrees ) originally meant to make peace, to reconcile someone, to be well disposed to someone. It came to mean to be satisfied with, to take pleasure in and then to take a pleasant attitude toward someone. In short it means to cause someone to be pleased with someone or something or to be pleasing to or acceptable to. **Aresko** can sometimes mean to strive to please to accommodate one's self to the opinions desires and interests of others. To **please** means to give or be the source of satisfaction, pleasure or contentment to another.

**Aresko** - 21v in the NT - Jdg. 20:15; Jdg. 20:16; 2 Sam. 10:18; 2 Ki. 3:26; 2 Chr. 15:11; Matt. 14:6; Mk. 6:22; Acts 6:5; Rom. 8:8; Rom. 15:1; Rom. 15:2; Rom. 15:3; 1 Co. 7:32; 1 Co. 7:33; 1 Co. 7:34; 1 Co. 10:33; Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Thess. 2:15; 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:4

**Francis de Sales** - Do not look forward to the changes and chances of this life in fear, rather look to them with full hope that, as they arise, God, Whose you are, will deliver you out of them. He has kept you hitherto,—do you but hold fast to His dear hand, and He will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand, He will bear you in His arms. Do not look forward to what may happen to-morrow; the same everlasting Father Who cares for you to-day will take care of you to-morrow, and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.

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**David Jeremiah** - People are single for four kinds of reasons: physical, medical, spiritual, or they just want to be single—not everybody wants to be married and apparently that is a part of God's plan. Some of the greatest people who ever served God were single. Rejoice in all the gifts God has given you, including your singleness.

Seeking marriage is not wrong, but don't let that search dominate your life. We must not make finding a marriage partner the supreme goal of our lives by putting all our energies into searching for a mate. We must learn to be in God's will. A very wise person said, "There is something far worse than single loneliness, and that is marital misery." Learn contentment, for it is great gain.

If God has a mate for you, He knows how to bring the two of you together. Don't take things into your own hands. Wherever you are, whatever your situation, use the time to grow both mentally and spiritually. (Sanctuary)

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### **Embracing Time Alone 1 Corinthians 7:32**

Recently, I traveled almost two hundred miles alone to participate in the Nebraska state bowling tournament. I popped an R. C. Sproul sermon into my CD player. In his message from Colossians 2–3, he spoke about "setting our minds on things above."

Several hours after listening to the sermon, I was still thinking about his message and how I could apply it to my life. I realized that if I had been traveling with someone else, my chances of concentrating exclusively on the message would not have been high. And



even if I had, I would not have had all the time I did to think about the message afterward.

Traveling by myself, I was “free from concern,” as 1 Corinthians 7:32 says, to focus on the things of God. Traveling with someone else might have led to a battle over the contents of the CD player.

For these reasons, I’m beginning to enjoy traveling by myself. I wouldn’t always want to do it, but it is one of the few times in my life beyond my daily devotional time that I am not “doing” something. I haven’t always used my travel time as productively as I did on this particular trip, but experiencing the benefits of “the Lord’s affairs” has motivated me to spend my travel time more wisely in the future.

I felt closer to God that particular morning than I had in quite awhile. As I walked into the bowling center later that day, I couldn’t shake the great feeling that it was a good day to be single. (Lee Warren)

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### C H Spurgeon - ‘Without carefulness’ ‘I would have you without carefulness.’ 1 Corinthians 7:32

I wish to say a word to some whose occupations prevent their attendance at the house of God. I am not going to censure or judge any, but I will say this: whenever I hear of a young man who has a situation with a moderate salary, who is able to get out to worship, and has the whole Sabbath-day to himself, so that he can help in the Sunday-school, and perhaps in some week-evening engagements, if I hear that he is offered twice as much money in a place where he must be shut out from worship and service, I hope he will look long before he makes the bargain. If part of the Sabbath must go, and all week-night privileges must go, I would in most cases say, ‘My brother, forego the temporal advantage for the sake of the spiritual.’ There may be exceptions to rules, and I lay down nothing as a hard-and-fast rule, but still let this be the general guide in such matters, ‘I would have you without carefulness.’ If it be so that he who has less has less care, let me have less. He who has a moderate income, with small responsibility, is a richer man than he who has twice as much, with twice as much responsibility, and only half as much opportunity of serving his God. For you, Christians, the best place you can have is where you can do most for Jesus; and the worst place you can have is where you are denied Christian privileges. No amount of salary can make up to you the disadvantage of being kept from the assemblies of the saints, or can make up to your soul the loss sustained by excessive labour in the house of bondage. ‘I would have you without carefulness.’

### 1 Corinthians 7:33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,

Amplified But the married man is anxious about worldly matters—how he may please his wife—

Wuest But he who is married is concerned with the things of the world, how he may please his wife, a ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:33 But a married man is concerned about the things of the world, how to please his wife,

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:33 But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife,

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:33 But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife--

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:33 ὁ γὰρ σὰς μεριμνῶν τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα,

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:33 and the married is anxious for the things of the world, how he shall please the wife.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:33 but he that is married is careful for the things of the world, how he may please his wife,

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:33 But a married man is concerned about the things of the world-- how he may please his wife--

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world-- how he may please his wife.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:33 but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife,

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:33 But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:33 but the man who is married gives his mind to the affairs of this world and to how he can please his wife, and he is divided in mind.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:33 But the married man is concerned about earthly things, that is, about how he can please his wife.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:33 But the married man gives his attention to the things of this world, how he may give pleasure to his wife.

- **concerned:** Ne 5:1-5 Lu 12:22 1Th 4:11-12 1Ti 5:8
- **how:** 1Co 7:3 1Sa 1:4-8 Eph 5:25-33 Col 3:19 1Pe 3:7
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MARRIED MAN'S CONCERN

**but one who is married is** (present tense - continually) **concerned** ([merimnao](#)) **about the things of the world** ([kosmos](#)), **how he may please** ([aresko](#)) **his wife** - The next phrase **his interests are divided** seems better at the end of his verse. And the man need to be concerned for Paul admonishes in 1 Ti 5:8 "if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

While it is not a perfect parallel there are some similarities to Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount when He declared

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.(Mt 6:24+)

**Arnold** - The married man has divided interests and loyalties. He wants to please the Lord and he wants to please his wife. Both are legitimate, God-given pursuits. The married man has obligations he must discharge and this demands some attention to the things of the world. In fact, the married man has the potential to get all wrapped up in worldly pursuits to care for his wife and family and forget his higher responsibility of service to Christ. This can be devastating to the spiritual life of a man.

### Related Resource:

- Give Me An Undivided Heart
- Play Craig Smith's oldie but goodie - [Single Heart](#) (and [Pure Heart](#) and the prayer "Fashion in me a heart's that's thirsting for You. Amen)

**1 Corinthians 7:34 and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.**

Amplified And he is drawn in diverging directions [his interests are divided and he is distracted from his devotion to God]. And the unmarried woman or girl is concerned and anxious about the matters of the Lord, how to be wholly separated and set apart in body and spirit; but the married woman has her cares [centered] in earthly affairs—how she may please her husband.

Wuest and is distracted. Both the unmarried woman and the virgin seek to promote the interests of the things of the Lord in order that they may be set-apart ones to God and His service both with respect to the body and the spirit. But the woman who is married is concerned with the things of the world, how she may please her husband. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:34 and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, to be holy both in body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the things of the world, how to please her husband.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:34 His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to

think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:34 and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:34 κα μεμ ρισται. κα γυν γαμος κα παρθ νος μεριμν τ το κυρ ου, να γ α κα τ σ ματι κα τ πνε ματι· δ γαμ σασα μεριμν τ το κ σμου, π ς ρ σ τ νδρ .

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:34 The wife and the virgin have been distinguished: the unmarried is anxious for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit, and the married is anxious for the things of the world, how she shall please the husband.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:34 and is divided. So also the woman that is unmarried and the virgin is careful for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married is careful for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:34 and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the things of the world-- how she may please her husband.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:34 There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world-- how she may please her husband.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:34 and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:34 So, too, the unmarried woman, and the virgin, gives her mind to the Lord's affairs and to being holy in body and spirit; but the married woman gives her mind to the affairs of this world and to how she can please her husband.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:34 His attention is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is concerned about the Lord's things so that she may be holy in body and in spirit. But the married woman is concerned about earthly things, that is, about how she can please her husband.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:34 And the wife is not the same as the virgin. The virgin gives her mind to the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in body and in spirit: but the married woman takes thought for the things of the world, how she may give pleasure to her husband.

- **is concerned:** Lu 2:36,37 2Co 7:11,12 8:16 11:28 1Ti 3:5 Tit 3:8
- **both:** 1Co 6:20 Ro 6:13 12:1,2 Php 1:20 1Th 5:23
- **she may:** Lu 10:40-42
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DIVIDED LOYALTIES

**And his interests are divided** - ICB (International Children's Bible) - "He must think about two things--pleasing his wife and pleasing the Lord. A woman who is not married or a girl who has never married is busy with the Lord's work. She wants to give herself fully--body and soul--to the Lord. But a married woman is busy with things of the world. She is trying to please her husband."

**Stephen Armstrong** - If we are married, whether husband or wife, then naturally we have our attention and allegiances divided. This is true even when our spouse is a believer who also wants to follow the Lord. The reality of marriage is that we care for the other person to a degree that causes us to second guess the Lord's call • And Paul is trying to help us follow the Lord with the least distraction possible

**The woman who is unmarried ([agamos](#)), and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and spirit** - ICB - "is busy with the Lord's work. She wants to give herself fully--body and soul--to the Lord." NLT = "can be more devoted to the Lord in body and in spirit,

**Arnold** - An **unmarried** woman or **virgin** is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world how she can please her husband. The **unmarried** woman can serve the Lord better because she has fewer distractions. She is set apart (**holy**) in **body and spirit** to more complete service to Christ. The married woman must divide her attention between Christ, husband and children and this is the right thing to do.

**Constable** - Comparing two equally committed Christians, an unmarried man can give more concentrated attention to the things of the Lord. A married man also needs to think about his family responsibilities. This is true of women, and particularly virgins, as well as men. Queen Elizabeth I said that England was her husband. Robertson and Plummer, p. 158.

**TECHNICAL NOTE - NET NOTE** - There are three viable variant readings at this point in the text. (1) The reading γυνή ἀγάμος καὶ παρθένης (hē gunē hē agamos kai hē parthenos, "the unmarried woman and the virgin") is represented by ancient and important MSS, as well as some significant versions (?15 B 104 365 1505 pc vg co). (2) The reading γυνή ἀγάμος καὶ παρθένης ἀγάμος ("the unmarried woman and the unmarried virgin") is also found in ancient and important MSS (?46 κ A 33 1739 1881 pc). (3) The reading γυνή καὶ παρθένης ἀγάμος ("the woman and the unmarried virgin") is found in Western MSS (D F G) and the majority of Byzantine cursives. Based upon external evidence, the first and second readings are the strongest; the readings both reach deep into the second century with strong testimony from MSS of the Alexandrian texttype. Internal evidence seems equally balanced: Scribes may have wanted to add ἀγάμος to παρθένης for stylistic reasons, but they might also have wanted to remove it because it sounded redundant. Because Paul's meaning is not quite clear, a decision on the proper textual reading is difficult. On the whole scribes tended to add to the text, not take from it. Thus the first reading should be favored as original, but this decision should be regarded as less than certain.

**NET NOTE on a virgin** - tn Grk "The unmarried woman and the virgin." The identity of the "virgin" here is a matter of interpretation (see note on "people who have never married" in [v. 25 for discussion](#)), which has in fact contributed to textual variation at this point in the text (see the text critical note above). As far as the translation is concerned, one must determine if one group of women or two are in view. It is possible that Paul means to refer to only one class of women here, namely unmarried virgins, but the use of the adjective ἀγάμος (hē agamos, "unmarried") with "woman" and not "virgin" precludes that interpretation; in addition, the use of the article with both "woman" and "virgin" implies that two distinct groups are in view. If two groups are in view, English would more naturally use the conjunction "or" to indicate the distinction. Thus the translation "An unmarried woman or a virgin" has been used to make clear that two groups are in view.

**but** - Term of contrast.

**One who is married is concerned about the things of the world([kosmos](#)), how she may please ([aresko](#)) her husband** - This emphasizes divided loyalties are unavoidable in marriage.

**Divided** ([3307](#)) **merizo** from **meris** = a part) means to divide, part, share, separate. To make an allotment (distribute, deal out, assign, apportion He 7:2, 2 Cor 10:13, Ro 12:3) **Friberg** - divide, separate; (1) as separating into component parts divide (Mt 12.25); (2) as apportioning out something to someone distribute, divide out, assign (Ro 12.3), opposite sunago (gather); middle share with someone (Lk 12.13) Merizo - 19v in NT - Matt. 12:25; Matt. 12:26; Mk. 3:24; Mk. 3:25; Mk. 3:26; Mk. 6:41; Lk. 12:13; Rom. 12:3; 1 Co. 1:13; 1 Co. 7:17; 1 Co. 7:34; 2 Co. 10:13; Heb. 7:2

**1 Corinthians 7:35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.**

Amplified Now I say this for your own welfare and profit, not to put [a halter of] restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly and in good order and to secure your undistracted and undivided devotion to the Lord.

Wuest But this I am saying for your own profit, not in order that I may throw a noose over you [that is, constrain you to obey my commands], but I am saying this in order that in a seemly manner you may assiduously serve the Lord without distraction. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:35 I am saying this for your benefit, not to place a limitation on you, but so that without distraction you may give notable and constant service to the Lord.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:35 I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:35 I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:35 I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:35 το το δ̄ πρ ς τ μ ν α τ ν σ μ φο ρ ο ν λ γ ω , ο χ ν α β ρ χ ο ν μ ν πι β λ ω λ λ π ρ ς τ ε σ χ η μ ο ν κ α ε π ρ ε δ ρ ο ν τ κυ ρ π ε ρ ι σ π ο τ ω ς .

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:35 And this for your own profit I say: not that I may cast a noose upon you, but for the seemliness and devotedness to the Lord, undistractedly,

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:35 And this I say for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is seemly, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:35 Now I am saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but because of what is proper and so that you may be devoted to the Lord without distraction.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:35 And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:35 I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:35 I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:35 I am saying this only to help you, not to put a bridle on you, but so that everything is as it should be, and you are able to give your undivided attention to the Lord.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:35 I'm saying this for your benefit, not to restrict you. I'm showing you how to live a noble life of devotion to the Lord without being distracted by other things.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:35 Now I say this for your profit; not to make things hard for you, but because of what is right, and so that you may be able to give all your attention to the things of the Lord.

- **not to put a restraint upon you** 1Co 7:2,5-9,28,36 Mt 19:12
- **to promote what is appropriate:** 1Co 7:36 Eph 5:3 Php 4:8 1Ti 1:10 Titus 2:3
- **And to secure (epiballo) undistracted devotion:** 1Co 7:33,34 Lu 8:14 Lk 10:40-42 Lk 21:34
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LASER FOCUS FOR THE LORD

**Laser-like focus means** aligning your thought patterns, belief system, emotions, and actions with your goals consistently. If you want to become significant in life, you need to align with your set goals. Stop looking at two directions at the same time, and start **focusing** like a laser.

**This I say for your own benefit** - That it might be profitable (cf use in 1 Cor 6:12+), helpful and to your advantage.

**not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate**- "Paul had already said in 1 Corinthians 7:35 that he was not laying down an ironclad rule for everybody to follow, regardless of circumstances." (Wiersbe)

**Arnold** - What Paul had to say about the advantages of singlehood were not to discourage the singles at Corinth but to encourage

them. He was giving advice he thought was best for singles. Yet, he did not want to put them in a noose or straitjacket, and they were perfectly free to choose the life they wanted to live whether married or unmarried. Most singles, men and women, really struggle with the idea of being single for life. Yet, when they do understand this is God's choice for them, they become grateful to the Lord, finding a new peace and determination for service for Christ. In the single state, they discover that Christ can meet their loneliness, for they appear alone but are never alone because God is with them. Single Christians should not grumble about their state, nor should they pout with the "woe is me" blues, but they should give themselves to the service of Christ. Look at the Apostle Paul. Because he had no distractions, he was able to move all over the Roman Empire. **Out of his complete dedication and devotion to Christ, he changed the world through his preaching and letter writing. Remember, even Jesus Christ was a single person. Therefore, we know that God has a very special plan for the single who is dedicated to Him.** When I was in Kenya, there was a single man named Vincent who was convinced God had given him the gift of celibacy for the time. He was from Uganda and in my class. He wrote a paper entitled, "The Single State" and here are some of his thoughts about being a single person:

- 1) I can have more time to devote to the Lord's work and potentially be less distracted from the cares of temporal life;
- 2) I am free to take risks that a father might not take who has the whole family dependent on him like traveling to a foreign land and doing risky jobs;
- 3) I have freedom to move around the world without having to pack up a household first, and this freedom has brought me moments that I would not trade for anything else this side of eternity;
- 4) I can adapt to perilous situations like the rugged life among the primitive tribes, in a guerilla war zone or in disease and famine;
- 5) The single state enables me to get the most out of the time God gives for His work, and one of my chief delights is that I do not fit my ministry around a family schedule, having to be home at a certain time every night;
- 6) I care not where or how I live or what hardships I go through, so that I may gain souls for Christ;
- 7) God is sovereign over who gets married and who does not, and He can be trusted to do what is good for me.

**Restraint** (1029)(**brochos**) referred to a snare or noose and was an allusion to the **Retiarius** = literally, "net-man" in Latin} among the Romans, who carried a small casting net, {rete,} which he endeavoured to throw over his adversary's head. Only in 1Co 7:35, Septuagint in context of an adulterous woman "on the hunt!" in Pr 6:5 and Pr 7:21; Of the ensnaring influence of associating with a man given to anger in Pr 22:25

**Appropriate** (2158) **euschemon** from **eu** = good + **scheme** = figure, shape, appearance) means comely (in accord with propriety), prominent (having a quality that thrusts itself into attention, conspicuous in position or importance). Respected - Receiving deferential regard. **Euschemon** can speak of that which is appropriate for display or presentable (1 Cor 12:24). Alternatively, **euschemon** speaks of people considered worthy of public admiration (the sense in most NT uses). All 5 NT uses - Mk. 15:43; Acts 13:50; Acts 17:12; 1 Co. 7:35; 1 Co. 12:24

**And to secure** (epiballo) **undistracted devotion to the Lord** - Paul has just alluded to the "distractions" associated marriage (1 Cor 7:33-34) **NLT** = "whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible." **ICB** = "And I want you to give yourselves fully to the Lord without giving your time to other things."

**Undistracted** (563)(**aperispastos** from **a** = without + **perispáo** = to draw different ways at same time = Martha in Lk 10:40) means without distraction or distracting care in regard to earthly things. Only in 1 Co 7:35. Not in the Septuagint.

**Devotion** (2138)(**euparedros** from **eu** = well + **paredros** = sitting near) an adjective meaning literally sitting beside, sitting constantly by, and thus **assiduous**, devoted or constantly attending to (in this only use in 1 Cor 7:35 to the Lord Jesus Christ and His cause). **BDAG** has "being in constant attendance, constantly in service." Liddell-Scott has "constant waiting on." Not in the Septuagint.

#### **Related Resource:**

- Comments on Paul's desire in Php 3:13 "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,



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## Single-minded Service

. . . so that you may be devoted to the Lord without distraction. (1 Cor. 7:35)

Two years after her divorce, Becky still struggled with loneliness. She kept busy with work, but she still had difficulty making friends at her new church, especially since she wasn't the most outgoing person. She often felt like a fifth wheel, the only single person in a world of married couples.

She had tried a singles Sunday school class but felt awkward. She had even joined a community book club but felt like she didn't fit in. Besides, her job took so much out of her, she only wanted to veg out in front of the TV in the evenings. Still, she did wish she were more connected and not so lonely.

Father, what should I do to connect more with others? Becky prayed. She immediately remembered overhearing a conversation as she walked to the sanctuary last Sunday about how there weren't enough workers in the nursery on Sunday mornings. Serving in the nursery would be something she could do well and a way to get to know others.

If we're honest, many of us think singleness is a curse, not a blessing. Paul, however, had something different to say. He said, "God gives the gift of single life to some. . . . When you're unmarried, you're free to concentrate on simply pleasing the Master" (1 Cor. 7:7, 32 MSG). Regardless of the reason, being single is an opportunity to use your time to serve as God leads you.

Perhaps He is leading you to teach a class, commit to being a prayer warrior, volunteer with a local ministry, or go on a short-term mission trip. Looked at with the right perspective, singleness can be an open door, a state of freedom that offers new opportunities. Ask God to show you how to make the most of it. (Journey Day by Day: Living Life Well)

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## Robert Morgan - Without Distraction

According to 1 Corinthians 7, there are many advantages to remaining single, for "He who is unmarried cares about the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord . . . without distraction." Evangelist John Berridge offers living proof. (Read my short biography account of John Berridge truly one of the unsung heroes of God and one of my favorite old saints).

Had John lived in London or Edinburgh, he would have been famous for his powerful preaching, but the Lord placed him in out-of-the-way villages where he became the "**Whitefield of the countryside.**" John was quaint and eccentric, but his strange ways merely added to the appeal and power of his ministry. He preached to great crowds in rural England, in one year alone leading over 4,000 people to Christ—and **he evangelized nonstop for 30 years.**

**He insisted he could best minister unmarried, and he worried that the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield didn't do likewise.** George Whitefield had married a woman with whom he had spent less than a week; she died in 1768. And poor John Wesley had marital woes. Writing to [Lady Huntingdon](#), patron of the English evangelists, Berridge observed:

**No trap [is] so mischievous to the field-preacher as wedlock; and it is laid for him at every hedge corner.** Matrimony has quite maimed poor Charles [Wesley], and might have spoiled John [Wesley] and George [Whitefield], if a wise Master had not graciously sent them a brace [pair] of ferrets. Dear George has his liberty again; and he will escape well if he is not caught by another tenterhook. Eight or nine years ago, having been grievously tormented with housekeeping, I thought of looking out for a Jezebel myself. But it seemed highly needful to ask advice of the Lord. So, kneeling down before the table, with a Bible between my hands, I besought the Lord to give me direction.

The Lord gave John Berridge Jeremiah 16:2—

**You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons and daughters in this place'**

Thus he relinquished all thoughts of marriage and gave himself to pleasing the Lord "without distraction." (From This Verse)

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## Nancy Leigh DeMoss - The Whole of Our Lives

I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.—1 Corinthians 7:35

I RECALL ONE OF MY FORMER PASTORS challenging us as members of his congregation to "go for broke with God." I like that. Tireless, wholehearted abandon to the will and work of the Lord ought to characterize our lives. But does it?

Many years ago, Communist leader Vladimir Lenin issued a similar challenge, though regarding a much different aim and objective, when he declared, “We must train men and women who will devote to the revolution not merely their spare evenings but the whole of their lives.” If the Communist revolution could call its followers to that kind of 24/7 devotion to its cause, what does it say when we as Christians model the idea of measured, “part-time Christian service,” while being careful to protect plenty of time to fulfill our own pursuits? Is Jesus not worthy of the “whole of our lives”?

This doesn't mean, of course, that a man or woman devoted to Christ can never relax or take a vacation without feeling guilty about it. But the older I get, the more I find myself evaluating my activities, my hobbies, and my leisure time in light of the price they will bring in eternity. From time to time, I sense the Lord directing me to cut back on, or even eliminate altogether, certain legitimate activities that are robbing me of time to pursue Him, things that are keeping me from making an eternal investment in the lives of people.

To be devoted to doing what pleases God, to live in the light of eternity, to be His willing bond servants—this is to fulfill the purpose for which we were created and to know the greatest possible joy in this life and the next.

Are you giving God merely your “spare evenings,” or the whole of your life?

**1 Corinthians 7:36 But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.**

Amplified But if any man thinks that he is not acting properly toward and in regard to his virgin [that he is preparing disgrace for her or incurring reproach], in case she is passing the bloom of her youth and if there is need for it, let him do what to him seems right; he does not sin; let them marry.

Wuest But, assuming that a certain man thinks that he is acting in an unseemly manner in the case of his virgin daughter, if she be past the bloom of youth, and it [a marriage] thus ought to take place, whatever he desires, let him be doing. He is not sinning. Let them [the daughter and the man she loves] marry. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:36 If anyone thinks he is acting inappropriately toward **his virgin**, if she is past the bloom of youth and it seems necessary, he should do what he wishes; he does not sin. Let them marry.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:36 But if a man thinks that he's treating **his fiancée** improperly and will inevitably give in to his passion, let him marry her as he wishes. It is not a sin.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:36 If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly **toward his betrothed**, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry-- it is no sin.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:36 If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward **the virgin he is engaged to**, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:36 Ε ὁ τις σχημονε ν π τ ν παρθ νον α το νομ ζει, ν π ρακμος κα ο τως φε λει γ νεσθα, θ λει ποιε τω, ο χ μαρτ νει, γαμε τωσαν.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:36 and if any one doth think it to be unseemly to his virgin, if she may be beyond the bloom of age, and it ought so to be, what he willeth let him do; he doth not sin -- let him marry.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:36 But if any man thinketh that he behaveth himself unseemly toward his virgin daughter, if she be past the flower of her age, and if need so requireth, let him do what he will; he sinneth not; let them marry.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:36 But if any man thinks he is acting improperly toward his virgin, if she is past marriageable age, and so it must be, he can do what he wants. He is not sinning; they can get married.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:36 But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:36 If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his fiancée, if his passions

are strong, and so it has to be, let him marry as he wishes; it is no sin. Let them marry.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:36 If anyone thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, and if a critical moment has come and so it has to be, let him do as he wishes. He is committing no sin; let them get married.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:36 If someone with strong passions thinks that he is behaving badly towards his fiancée and that things should take their due course, he should follow his desires. There is no sin in it; they should marry.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:36 No father would want to do the wrong thing when his virgin daughter is old enough to get married. If she wants to get married, he isn't sinning by letting her get married.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:36 But if, in any man's opinion, he is not doing what is right for his virgin, if she is past her best years, and there is need for it, let him do what seems right to him; it is no sin; let them be married.

- **past her youth:** 1Sa 2:33
- **must be so** 1Co 7:9,37
- **sin:** 1Co 7:28
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A COMPLICATED SECTION VERSES 36-38

**Note:** There is a significant difference in the way translations render parthenos in verses 36-38 as the ESV has "**betrothed**" and NAS "**virgin** [daughter]." The other variations are highlighted in yellow.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38ESV If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his **betrothed**, **if his passions are strong**, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: **let them marry-- it is no sin**. 37 But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but **having his desire under control**, and has determined this in his heart, **to keep her as his betrothed**, he will do well. 38 So then **he who marries his betrothed does well**, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. (1Co 7:36-38 ESV)

**ESV Study Bible Comment** - If his passions are strong translates a difficult word (Gk. hyperakmos) that can also mean "past one's prime" when used in reference to a woman. The ESV translation is preferable, however, because it is consistent with Paul's reasoning in vv. 2-3 and 9, and it would be strange for Paul to give permission to marry only when women are "past their prime." And it has to be probably refers to a sense of both moral and physical necessity to get married. Paul's comment is not intended as a disapproval of marriage (cf. vv. 28, 38; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Tim. 4:1-4). 1 Cor 7:37-38 keep her as his betrothed. Paul now turns to the person who has the gift of celibacy and is able to refrain from marrying. Does well and even better illustrate the general principle that among choices that are morally good and not sinful, God can still give different opportunities for service, which will have different consequences.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38 But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his **virgin daughter**, **if she is past her youth**, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, **he does not sin; let her marry**. 37 But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but **has authority over his own will**, and has decided this in his own heart, **to keep his own virgin daughter**, he will do well. 38 So then both **he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well**, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

**EXPLANATORY NOTE FROM NET BIBLE** - Greek "virgin," either a fiancée, a daughter, or the ward of a guardian. 1 Cor 7:36-38. There are two common approaches to understanding the situation addressed in these verses.

**One view involves a father or male guardian deciding whether to give his daughter or female ward in marriage** (cf. NASB, NIV margin). The evidence for this view is:

(1) the phrase in v. 37 (Grk) "to keep his own virgin" fits this view well ("keep his own virgin [in his household]" rather than give her in marriage), but it does not fit the second view (there is little warrant for adding "her" in the way the second view translates it: "to keep her as a virgin").

(2) The verb used twice in v. 38 (γαμιζω, gamizō) normally means "to give in marriage" not "to get married." The latter is usually expressed by γαμέω (gameō), as in v. 36b.

(3) The father deciding what is best regarding his daughter's marriage reflects the more likely cultural situation in ancient Corinth, though it does not fit modern Western customs. While Paul gives his advice

in such a situation, he does not command that marriages be arranged in this way universally. If this view is taken, the translation will read as follows: "7:36 If anyone thinks he is acting inappropriately toward his unmarried daughter, if she is past the bloom of youth and it seems necessary, he should do what he wishes; he does not sin. Let them marry. 7:37 But the man who is firm in his commitment, and is under no necessity but has control over his will, and has decided in his own mind to keep his daughter unmarried, does well. 7:38 So then the one who gives his daughter in marriage does well, but the one who does not give her does better."

**The other view is taken by NRSV, NIV text, NJB, REB:** a single man deciding whether to marry the woman to whom he is engaged. The evidence for this view is:

- (1) it seems odd to use the word "virgin" (vv. 36, 37, 38) if "daughter" or "ward" is intended.
- (2) The other view requires some difficult shifting of subjects in v. 36, whereas this view manages a more consistent subject for the various verbs used.
- (3) The phrases in these verses are used consistently elsewhere in this chapter to describe considerations appropriate to the engaged couple themselves (cf. vv. 9, 28, 39). It seems odd not to change the phrasing in speaking about a father or guardian. If this second view is taken, the translation will read as follows: "7:36 If anyone thinks he is acting inappropriately toward his fiancée, if his passions are too strong and it seems necessary, he should do what he wishes; he does not sin. Let them marry. 7:37 But the man who is firm in his commitment, and is under no necessity but has control over his will, and has decided in his own mind to keep her as his fiancée, does well. 7:38 So then, the one who marries his fiancée does well, but the one who does not marry her does better."

**Moody Bible Commentary on 1 Cor 7:36-38** - These verses refer to a hypothetical situation in which a betrothed man was considering remaining single (so RSV; TNIV; NIV; ESV), not to a father who was debating marrying off his daughter (NASB). Several points support this view.

1. **First**, any man, in the context of the instructions to those who are single in 1 Cor 7:25-35, is probably someone who is unmarried.
2. **Second**, acting unbecomingly, when used in the ancient world for relationships between men and women, overwhelmingly referred to sexual misconduct, making it unlikely that 1 Cor 7:36 refers to a father's deliberations.
3. **Third**, the NASB's if she is past her youth is better translated "If he is sexually awakened" (RSV, "if his passions are strong"). The adjective **huperakmos**, translated wrongly by the NASB as past her youth, actually meant "sexually enlivened," or "to be sexually mature and feel the effects of it," and does not refer to old age in either gender.
4. Consequently, **fourth**, the subject of the verb is in the phrase "if he is sexually enlivened" (once again, mistranslated by the NASB as if she is past her youth) should be understood as "he" and not "she." Paul was addressing the betrothed man in v. 36 (he is acting... his virgin) so that "he" is the more likely subject of "is" than "she."
5. **Fifth**, if it must be so, if the betrothed man cannot control himself and sexual impropriety is imminent, then he should do what he wishes, and apparently what he wishes is to have sexual relations with his fiancée, for which marriage is a happy prerequisite.
6. **Sixth**, let her marry is based on an inferior manuscript tradition, and the better reading is "let them marry" (RSV; TNIV; NIV; ESV). This fits the "betrothed young man" view better, as Paul might have written "let her marry" if he were addressing a father mulling over allowing his daughter to wed.
7. **Seventh**, v. 37 reflects this man's resolve to remain single, a resolve not coerced by the anti-marriage advocates or by Paul (for the Greco-Roman background on this passage, see Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 243-49).
8. **Eighth**, to keep his own virgin was a phrase that meant "to safeguard a woman's virginity," and expresses the decision not to marry and have relations (cf. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 353-54). The verb *gamizo* (NASB gives... in marriage) has a causative sense ("to give in marriage," "to have someone marry") elsewhere (Mt 24:38), but verbs with "—izo" endings were losing their causative force in Hellenistic Greek, and *gamizo* probably is synonymous with *gameo*, "to marry, take in marriage" (BDAG, 188).

**But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth** - NAS is probably

not the best translation. Most other modern translations (SEE ABOVE) **do not** interpret this as the man's actual daughter.

**Arnold** - If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. If a couple is engaged, usually betrothed by parents in New Testament times, and she is getting older with the possibility of missing her best child bearing years, they should marry. Neither the man or woman is sinning by getting married. "Acting improperly" most likely refers to sexual temptations and acts short of intercourse.

**Wiersbe** - Paul hit on a key problem in 1 Corinthians 7:36 when he mentioned "the flower of her age." This is a delicate phrase that simply means the girl is getting older. Dr. Kenneth Wuest translates it "past the bloom of her youth." She is starting to become one of the "unclaimed blessings" in the church. The danger, of course, is that she rush into marriage just to avoid becoming a spinster, and she might make a mistake. A pastor friend of mine likes to say to couples, "Better to live in single loneliness than in married cussedness!"

**Stephen Armstrong** favors the ESV rendering - Remember, in Paul's day a marriage began with a **betrothal**, which we might call an engagement. But unlike today, the engagement was a much more solemn relationship that could not be easily broken. So Paul is addressing the situation where a man is currently betrothed to a virgin but he has heard Paul's teaching and is contemplating remaining unmarried. What should such a man do? Go through with the marriage or remain single?. Once again for this delicate situation, Paul gives very sensitive advice. **First**, he says if you believe you are acting in an dishonoring way to the woman, and assuming she is already of marrying age, then he should go through with the marriage. On the other hand, if a man can pass three tests, he is in a position to forgo marriage and remain single in serving the Lord. First, the man must be able to stand firm in his own heart. He must be sure that this is a conviction brought by the Lord. He's not trying to impress anyone or appear pious. He is convinced in a manner that reflects a faith-led decision. He is prepared for a life of singleness and he is convicted of that call. **Secondly**, if the man understands he is under no constraint. The word of God does not require the man forgo marriage. And neither does any man dictate this choice for us, not even Paul himself. This is a choice we make in freedom, not as a result of Law. **Thirdly**, the man has authority over his own will concerning the matter. The question here is whether the man has made promises or entered into binding agreements concerning the marriage. If he has, then he no longer has authority over his own will in this situation. He is bound by his previous commitments. If he can pass these tests, then Paul says at the end of 1 Cor 7:37 he does well to leave the fiancé a virgin and to serve the Lord in singleness. Likewise, if the man cannot pass these tests and decides to give the woman in marriage (to himself), then he is not sinning either. Once again Paul says we do not sin when we choose to marry. This isn't an issue of right vs. wrong. It's a choice between good and better, depending on our circumstances. So in 1 Cor 7:38 Paul says it is well to do one and better to do the other

**Past her youth** (5230)(**hyperakmos/hyperakmos** from **hupér** = beyond + **akmḗ** = the high point or flower of age, particularly with respect to marriage. **Zodhiates** says "Beyond or past the flower of one's age or life, past the usual age for marriage" It pertains to being past a point in time, possibly past puberty and now at a marriageable age. **Gingrich** - past one's prime, past the bloom of youth if it refers to the woman; with strong passions if it refers to the man. **Friberg** - strictly beyond a high point or prime in 1C 7.36 is variously interpreted, depending on one's understanding of gamizo and whether huper adds a temporal or intensifying role; (1) as referring to an unmarried woman, with the temporal sense beyond the prime of life, past marriageable age; (2) as referring to an unmarried man, with the intensifying sense with (too) strong sexual desires

Note from **Moody Bible Commentary** - The adjective **hyperakmos**, translated wrongly by the NASB as past her youth, actually meant "sexually enlivened," or "to be sexually mature and feel the effects of it," and does not refer to old age in either gender.

**Colin Brown's discussion in NIDNTT** - πέρακμος G5644 (hyperakmos), past the peak, overripe, begin to fade; or, overwhelmingly strong, overpassionate.

CL & OT The word is formed from the prep. hyper, for, beyond, and the noun akmḗ, peak, which is used in the sense of the peak or high point in human development in Plato, Rep. 5 p. 640e and Philo, Leg. All. 1, 10. Diod.S. 32, 11, 1 speaks of the akmḗ tēs hēlikias of a woman (on hēlikia → Age, Stature) and also uses it of a virgin (Frag. 34, 35, 2, 39). Diog.L. 5, 65 tells of the pity felt for a father of a virgin who because of the smallness of her dowry goes beyond the prime of her age (ektrechousa ton akmaion tēs hēlikias kairon). J. M. Ford links the word with the Mishnaic Heb. bōḡereṭ, lit. "wrinkled", but in this kind of context "past her girlhood" or "at the age when levirate marriage is incumbent on her" ("The Rabbinic Background of St. Paul's Use of hyperakmos", Journal of Jewish Studies 18, 1966, 89 ff.). On the other hand, cognate words have been found in relation to human desires: akmaia epithymia (Pseudo-Clementines, Homily p. 8, 17 Lag.; akmazō, Syntipas p. 10, 14).

NT The word occurs only at 1 Cor. 7:36. Two opposing lines of interpretation have been put forward. On the one hand, the subject of the verse has traditionally been taken to refer to the father of a virgin daughter. In this case, the interpretation would be: "If anyone [i.e. any father] thinks that he is not behaving properly to his virgin [parthenon; sc. daughter], and if she be beyond age [ean ē hyperakmos], and it has to be, let him do as he wishes; he does not sin—let them marry [gameitōsan]." This is further supported by the use of gamizō twice in v. 38 which normally means to give in marriage. Thus: "So that he who gives in marriage [ho gamizōn] his virgin does well; and he who does not give in marriage [ho mē gamizōn] does better." On parthenos in these verses → Woman, art. παρθένος.

On the other hand, there is the interpretation which takes the subject of these verse to be the man who has some kind of liaison with the parthenos. This is not explicitly defined. It may imply a betrothal where marriage has been put off on the grounds of the spiritual considerations that Paul is urging in this passage. Some interpreters take this to refer to a spiritual marriage which has not been consummated physically. But evidence for such marriages is considerably later than the NT period, and the use of gamizō in v. 38 would hardly seem appropriate, if this were the case. In this case the interpretation of the verse would be: "If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly to his virgin, and he be overpassionate [hyperakmos], and it has to be, let him do as he wishes, he does not sin—let them marry. But he who is firmly established in his heart, having no necessity, has power over his own will, and has judged this in his heart to keep her as his virgin, he will do well. So that he who marries his own virgin does well, and he who does not marry does better" (vv. 36ff.). This interpretation involves no change of subject in v. 36, and offers a thoroughly realistic assessment of the situation. Moreover, there are exceptions to the general rule that gamizō means to give in marriage (cf. Moulton-Milligan, 121).

In view of this last point, it would also be possible to take the subject of this verse to be the man and still refer hyperakmos to the virgin, i.e. the man should go ahead and marry her on the grounds of her age.

In the last analysis, one cannot rule out any of these interpretations as impossible. However, the general tenor of Paul's recommendations remains clear. It is not a sin to marry; out of personal humanitarian considerations it may be right to do so. On the other hand, times make celibacy preferable. C. Brown

**Acting unbecomingly** (807) (**aschemoneo** act in defiance of social and moral standards, with resulting disgrace, embarrassment, and shame, behave indecently, act improperly, to be rude, behave disgracefully, dishonorably

**Virgin** (3933) **parthenos** generally is used of a female who is beyond puberty but not married and still a virgin. In 2 Cor 11:2 parthenos is used figuratively of the church, the bride pledged to Christ.. Some contexts do not focus on the meaning virginity. The clear sense of **parthenos** in Mt 1:23 quoted from Isa 7:14+ (Lxx uses parthenos for Heb - **'almah** - see below) is of a woman who has not been intimate with a man (cp Lk 1:27). Paul uses parthenos in First Corinthians to refer to a woman of marriageable age. In Mt 25:1, 7, 11 parthenos refers to young women of marriageable age. **J D Watson** writes that "Even in all their excesses, the ancient Greeks highly valued virginity. It was, in fact, a characteristic of many of the goddesses of pagan religions. The chief examples were the Greek goddesses Artemis (Diana among the Romans) and Athene (Roman, Minerva) (Ed: cp **Athena Parthenos**). Athene's temple in Athens was actually named the Parthenon (see **etymology**)."

**Parthenos** - 15x in 14v - Matt. 1:23; Matt. 25:1; Matt. 25:7; Matt. 25:11; Lk. 1:27; Acts 21:9; 1 Co. 7:25; 1 Co. 7:28; 1 Co. 7:34; 1 Co. 7:36; 1 Co. 7:37; 1 Co. 7:38; 2 Co. 11:2; Rev. 14:4

**and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry** - ESV = "if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry-- it is no sin."

**Related Resource** (not free):

- David Garland's in depth discussion pp 336-343 [Baker Exegetical Commentary- 1 Corinthians](#) or [Logos Version](#)

**1 Corinthians 7:37 But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well.**

Amplified But whoever is firmly established in his heart [strong in mind and purpose], not being forced by



necessity but having control over his own will and desire, and has resolved this in his heart to keep his own virginity, he is doing well.

Wuest But he who stands firm in his heart, having no constraint upon him, but has authority concerning his own private desire, and has come to a settled decision to be keeping his own daughter in a state of virginity, shall do well. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

ICB But another man might be more sure in his mind. There may be no need for marriage, so he is free to do what he wants. If he has decided in his own heart not to marry, he is doing the right thing.

NLT But if he has decided firmly not to marry and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry.

NET 1 Corinthians 7:37 But the man who is firm in his commitment, and is under no necessity but has control over his will, and has decided in his own mind to keep his own virgin, does well.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:37 But if he has decided firmly not to marry and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:37 But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:37 But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin--this man also does the right thing.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:37 ς δ σθηκεν ν τ καρδ α το δρα ος μ χων ν γκην, ξουσαν δ χει περ το δ ου θελ ματος κα το το κ κρικεν ν τ δ καρδ , τηρε ν τ ν αυτο παρθ νον, καλ ς ποι σει.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:37 And he who hath stood stedfast in the heart -- not having necessity -- and hath authority over his own will, and this he hath determined in his heart -- to keep his own virgin -- doth well;

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:37 But he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power as touching in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, shall do well.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:37 But he who stands firm in his heart (who is under no compulsion, but has control over his own will) and has decided in his heart to keep his own virgin, will do well.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:37 Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:37 But if someone stands firm in his resolve, being under no necessity but having his own desire under control, and has determined in his own mind to keep her as his fiancée, he will do well.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:37 The one who stands firm in his resolve, however, who is not under compulsion but has power over his own will, and has made up his mind to keep his virgin, will be doing well.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:37 But if he stands firm in his resolution, without any compulsion but with full control of his own will, and decides to let her remain as his fiancée, then he is acting well.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:37 However, a father may have come to a decision about his daughter. If his decision is to keep her at home because she doesn't want to get married, that's fine.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:37 But the man who is strong in mind and purpose, who is not forced but has control over his desires, does well if he comes to the decision to keep her a virgin.

- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint ([anagke](#)) but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well** - See comments on verse 36.

**Firm** ([1476](#)) **hedraios** from **hedra** = seat, chair) means sedentary but figuratively means steadfast. Metaphor of mind and heart and purpose as one seated in a chair. Used only 3x in NT - 1 Co. 7:37; 1 Co. 15:58+ (Therefore, my beloved brethren, **be** steadfast (hedraios), immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in [locative of sphere] the Lord.); Col. 1:23+

**1 Corinthians 7:38 So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.**

Amplified So also then, he [the father] who gives his virgin (his daughter) in marriage does well, and he [the father] who does not give [her] in marriage does better.

Wuest So that also he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage is doing well, and he who does not do so will do better. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then, the one who marries his own virgin does well, but the one who does not, does better.

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:38 So the person who marries his fiancée does well, and the person who doesn't marry does even better.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:38 στε κα γαμ ζων τ v αυτο παρθ νον καλ ς ποιε κα μ γαμ ζων κρε σσον ποι σει.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:38 so that both he who is giving in marriage doth well, and he who is not giving in marriage doth better.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then both he that giveth his own virgin daughter in marriage doeth well; and he that giveth her not in marriage shall do better.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then he who marries his virgin does well, but he who does not marry will do better.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then, he who marries his fiancée does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then, the one who marries his virgin does well; the one who does not marry her will do better.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:38 In other words, he who marries his fiancée is doing well, and he who does not, better still.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:38 So it's fine for a father to give his daughter in marriage, but the father who doesn't give his daughter in marriage does even better.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:38 So then, he who gets married to his virgin does well, and he who keeps her unmarried does better.

- **then:** 1Co 7:28
- **does well:** 1Co 7:2 Heb 13:4
- **do better:** 1Co 7:1,8,26,32-34,37
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better** ([kreitton/kreisson](#))- See comments on verse 36.

**Arnold** - Some scholars think this whole section is about a father and his virgin daughter. If the father thinks he has bridled his daughter to the extent she might be tempted to engage in premarital sex, then he may give permission for her to marry. In those days marriages occurred when girls were anywhere between fifteen and twenty years of age. Parents in the New Testament had

tremendous responsibilities in picking the right mate for their son or daughter, and determining when the child was emotionally ready for marriage. If this is the correct interpretation, there is a very important principle we must not overlook: Children who are considering marriage should not do so unless they receive their parent's consent. God says we are to honor our parents, and because parents have wisdom, we should listen to them about the person we think we want to marry. If parents do not approve and we marry anyway, we will most likely always have problems with our parents.

**1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.**

**Amplified** A wife is bound to her husband by law as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she will, only [provided that he too is] in the Lord.

**Wuest** A wife is bound as long as her husband may live. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she desires, only in the Lord. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**NET** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound as long as her husband is living. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes (only someone in the Lord).

**NLT** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord.

**ESV** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

**NIV** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.

**GNT** 1 Corinthians 7:39 Γυνὼν δεσμεύεται ὡς ὁ ζῶν ἄνδρς· ἂν δὲ κοιμηθῇ ὁ ἄνδρς, λευθεύεται ἵνα ἀγαμηθῇ ὅποιον ἂν θέλῃ ὁ κύριος.

**KJV** 1 Corinthians 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

**YLT** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife hath been bound by law as long time as her husband may live, and if her husband may sleep, she is free to be married to whom she will -- only in the Lord;

**ASV** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

**CSB** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound as long as her husband is living. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to anyone she wants-- only in the Lord.

**NKJ** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

**NRS** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord.

**NAB** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whomever she wishes, provided that it be in the Lord.

**NJB** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is tied as long as her husband is alive. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry anybody she likes, only it must be in the Lord.

**GWN** 1 Corinthians 7:39 A married woman must remain with her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if the man is a Christian.

**BBE** 1 Corinthians 7:39 It is right for a wife to be with her husband as long as he is living; but when her husband is dead, she is free to be married to another; but only to a Christian.

- **wife:** 1Co 7:10,15 Ro 7:2-3
- **only:** Ge 6:2 De 7:3,4 Mal 2:11 2Co 6:14-16
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passage:

Romans 7:2-3+ For the married woman is **bound** ([deo](#)) by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released ([katargeo](#)) from the law concerning the husband. 3 So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

## A WIDOW IS FREE TO MARRY A BELIEVER

**A wife is bound** ([deo](#)) **as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead**- Dead is literally fall asleep but it is often used in the Bible as a euphemism for the death of a believer.

**Is dead** (Fall asleep) ([2837](#)) [koimao](#) related to [keimai](#) = to lie outstretched, to lie down) means to cause to sleep, is the word from which we get our word cemetery (see note below) which it was the early Christians optimistic name for a graveyard. It meant a sleeping place. It really was a synonym for a dormitory, a place where people sleep. This metaphorical use of the word sleep is appropriate because of the similarity in appearance between a sleeping body and a dead body; restfulness and peace normally characterize both. The object of the metaphor is to suggest that as the sleeper does not cease to exist while his body sleeps, so the dead person continues to exist despite his absence from the region in which those who remain can communicate with him, and that, as sleep is known to be temporary, so the death of the body will be found to be. Sleep has its waking, death will have its resurrection. In short, death to the believer is a sleep for his body—a period of rest to be followed by a glorious day.

**Koimao** -18v in NT - Matt. 27:52; Matt. 28:13; Lk. 22:45; Jn. 11:11; Jn. 11:12; Acts 7:60; Acts 12:6; Acts 13:36; 1 Co. 7:39; 1 Co. 11:30; 1 Co. 15:6; 1 Co. 15:18; 1 Co. 15:20; 1 Co. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:13; 1 Thess. 4:14; 1 Thess. 4:15; 2 Pet. 3:4

**She is free** ([eleutheros](#)) **to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord- Amplified** - "[provided that he too is] in the Lord." That is to say he is a believer.

This is the strongest NT verse supporting the idea that Christians should marry only other Christians.

-- Moody Bible Commentary

**Arnold** - A widow is free to marry the husband of her choice according to Paul. Apparently she did not have to get parental consent, although that might not be a bad idea. The widow is free to remarry but only in the Lord. She can remarry only a Christian. Christians are told not to be yoked up with unbelievers and this certainly applies to marriage. "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness... What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever" (2 Cor. 6:14-15)? An old Puritan preacher once said, "If you marry a child of the Devil, you will be sure to have trouble with your father-in-law." When a Christian marries an unbeliever, there is really no possibility of true oneness. Paul says a widow facing her declining years, if she senses a great loneliness and needs companionship, may remarry in good conscience, but she must not marry just anyone out of loneliness. She must marry a Christian and preferably a Spirit-filled Christian.

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**Jon Courson** - Throughout the centuries, people have read I Corinthians 7 and concluded that, because he speaks so highly of the single state, Paul has a problem with marriage. But that is because they fail to take into account Paul's full counsel—for in his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul elevates marriage to a place of utmost glory when he uses it as an illustration for no less a relationship than that of Christ and the Church.

The way a husband lays down his life for his wife and the way a wife submits to her husband is a powerful illustration which can be seen on every street in every neighborhood. Bunches of people aren't into church, so the Lord brings the Church to them through the illustration of marriage wherein people see how much He loves the Church and how the Church submits to Him. It's an awesome responsibility for all who are married. That is not to say people need to see perfection—just something remarkably different than what they see in society.

And yet, as seen here in I Corinthians 7, Paul says singleness has its own unique beauty, its own important role to play in the Body. The single state is not to be looked down upon, dreaded, or merely endured. Those who are called to a single life or who find themselves in a single state fulfill a very real function—to serve the Lord with spontaneity and without distraction.

Marriage is a picture, but, in a sense, singleness can be the reality—for it is the single person uniquely who can say, 'I am married to

You, Lord. You are my Husband, my Love, my best Friend. And I will be devoted to you single-heartedly for as long as You have me in this state.'

Whether single or married, widowed or divorced—be content wherever God has you. And whatever your position, make Jesus your passion. (A Day's Journey)

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### Warren Wiersbe -MAKING MARRIAGE LAST

It is God's will that the marriage union be permanent, a lifetime commitment. There is no place in Christian marriage for a "trial marriage," nor is there any room for the "escape-hatch attitude: "If the marriage doesn't work, we can always get a divorce."

For this reason, marriage must be built on something sturdier than good looks, money, romantic excitement, and social acceptance. There must be Christian commitment, character, and maturity. There must be a willingness to grow, to learn from each other, to forgive and forget, to minister to one another.

Paul closed the section by telling the widows that they were free to marry, but the man "must belong to the Lord" (v. 39). This means that they must not only marry believers, but marry in the will of God. Paul's counsel was that they remain single, but he left the decision to them.

God has put "walls" around marriage, not to make it a prison, but to make it a safe fortress. The person who considers marriage a prison should not get married. When two people are lovingly and joyfully committed to each other—and to their Lord—the experience of marriage is one of enrichment and enlargement. They grow together and discover the richness of serving the Lord as a "team" in their home and church.

Applying God's Truth:

1. Based on personal observations, what would you say are the most common reasons for divorce?
2. Now, thinking of the couples you know who have been together for a long time, what do you see as the "secrets" of a strong marriage?
3. In what ways do you feel people today take marriage (and remarriage) too lightly? (Pause for Power)

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### 1 Corinthians 7:40 But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

Amplified But in my opinion [a widow] is happier (more blessed and to be envied) if she does not remarry. And also I think I have the Spirit of God.

Wuest But she is in a state more conducive to her well-being if she remains as she is, in my judgment. However, I think, as for myself, I also have God's Spirit [in this, as well as my own judgment]. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 7:40 But in my opinion, she will be happier if she remains as she is— and I think that I too have the Spirit of God!

NLT 1 Corinthians 7:40 But in my opinion it would be better for her to stay single, and I think I am giving you counsel from God's Spirit when I say this.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:40 Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

NIV 1 Corinthians 7:40 In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is--and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

GNT 1 Corinthians 7:40 μακαριωτ ρα ὁ στικ ν ο τωσ με ν , κατ τ ν μ ν γν μην· δοκ ὁ κ γ πνε μα θεο χειν.

KJV 1 Corinthians 7:40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

YLT 1 Corinthians 7:40 and she is happier if she may so remain -- according to my judgment; and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

ASV 1 Corinthians 7:40 But she is happier if she abide as she is, after my judgment: and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

CSB 1 Corinthians 7:40 But she is happier if she remains as she is, in my opinion. And I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 7:40 But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment-- and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

NRS 1 Corinthians 7:40 But in my judgment she is more blessed if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

NAB 1 Corinthians 7:40 She is more blessed, though, in my opinion, if she remains as she is, and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

NJB 1 Corinthians 7:40 She would be happier if she stayed as she is, to my way of thinking -- and I believe that I too have the Spirit of God.

GWN 1 Corinthians 7:40 However, she will be more blessed if she stays as she is. That is my opinion, and I think that I, too, have God's Spirit.

BBE 1 Corinthians 7:40 But it will be better for her to keep as she is, in my opinion: and it seems to me that I have the Spirit of God.

- **she:** 1Co 7:1,8,26,35
- **I think:** 1Co 7:25 9:1-3 14:36,37 2Co 10:8-10 12:11 1Th 4:8 2Pe 3:15,16
- [1 Corinthians 7 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S JUDGMENT FAVORS SINGLENESS

**But in my opinion she is happier if she remains (meno) as she is - Amplified** = "But in my opinion [a widow] is happier (more blessed and to be envied) if she does not remarry." **Wuest** = "But she is in a state more conducive to her well-being if she remains as she is, in my judgment."

**My opinion** does not in any way mean this was not inspired but that there was no authoritative teaching elsewhere in the Bible and just to rebut the skeptics he adds "I also have the Spirit of God!" (See 2 Peter 1:21+). (See preceding discussion of [plenary inspiration](#) related to 1 Cor 7:12 = "to the rest I say, not the Lord")

**Arnold** - If a widow stays single, which Paul thinks is the happier state, she has more time to serve and please the Lord. Many times widows and widowers admit that the second marriage was a mistake, although sometimes the second marriage is a real blessing.

**and I think that I also have the Spirit of God - NLT** - "I think I am giving you counsel from God's Spirit when I say this."

**Arnold** Marriage is serious business. Warren Wiersbe in the book *Be Wise* suggests five questions to be answered when considering marriage: 1) What is my gift from God? 2) Am I marrying a believer? 3) Are the circumstances such that marriage is right? 4) How will marriage affect my service for Christ? 5) Am I prepared to enter into this union for life? Every single person when feeling a little panicky about not being married should meditate on the truth that there is something worse than not being married and that is being married to the wrong person. Or as Jim Fitzgerald wisely says, "Better to be single and want to be married than to be married and want to be single."

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**Wiersbe summarizes Chapter 7** - As you review this chapter, you cannot help but be impressed with the seriousness of marriage. Paul's counsel makes it clear that God takes marriage seriously, and that we cannot disobey God's Word without suffering painful consequences. While both Paul and Jesus leave room for divorce under certain conditions, this can never be God's first choice for a couple. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:14-16) and certainly no believer should consider divorce until all avenues of reconciliation have been patiently explored.

While a person's marital failure may hinder him from serving as a pastor or deacon (1 Tim. 3:2, 12), it need not keep him from ministering in other ways. Some of the best personal soul winners I have known have been men who, before their conversion, had the unfortunate experience of divorce. A man does not have to hold an office in order to have a ministry.

In summary, each person must ask himself or herself the following questions if marriage is being contemplated:

1. What is my gift from God?



2. Am I marrying a believer?
3. Are the circumstances such that marriage is right?
4. How will marriage affect my service for Christ?

## The Gift of Celibacy

There are some basic concepts Christians need to understand about celibacy.

First, a single person must have the gift of celibacy. "I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that" (1 Cor. 7:7). This gift involves control over one's sex drives so as to avoid sexual immorality.

Second, the gift of celibacy may be temporary. A person may have the gift for five or ten years and then choose to get married. C.S. Lewis did not get married until he was 60 years old.

Third, a single person can serve the Lord more effectively than a married person. The issue is not moral superiority or higher spirituality but a matter of time and undivided attention to Christ and His kingdom.

Fourth, never think of a single person as strange, odd or perverted. Never call a single person an "old maid" or a "weird bachelor," for he or she may bring glory to God in a way that no married person ever could. It is not disgrace to be single.

Fifth, there is no spiritual advantage in being single over being married—both are gifts from God. However, the Roman Catholics and others have taken the single state to be morally and spiritually higher than the marriage state. The priesthood takes the vow not to marry for this very reason. It may interest you to note that the celibacy of the priesthood was made mandatory under Pope Gregory VII in 1079 A.D. An unmarried priesthood has no biblical or historical support.

However, for some Christians to stay unmarried is to their advantage. Yet, the single state has nothing to do with spirituality or moral superiority but the use of time. Sixth, some of the best Christians of all time have been single men and women: the Apostle Paul, St. Augustine, Robert Murray McCheyne, Florence Nightingale, [Henrietta Mears](#), [Lottie Moon](#), John R.W. Stott and many others.

There are multiple millions of singles in the United States today, and the philosophy of most is, "Live it up; swing as much as possible; do your own thing; live life with gusto; have sex without the responsibilities of marriage." God has some very serious and sobering thoughts for the modern-day single. He says, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators (those guilty of premarital sex) and adulterers (those guilty of extramarital sex) God will judge" (Heb. 13:4 NASB). God honors the single state, but He hates all sexual immorality and will judge it!

Are you single? Have you involved yourself in activities which displease the Lord and which stir His wrath? There is forgiveness. There is hope for a better kind of life. There is power to cope with sex drives. Jesus Christ died for sin and sinners. No matter how rank your sin, whether it be gross immorality or sins of the mind, Jesus Christ forgives sinful people and places His eternal love upon them. Trust Christ and he will wipe your sinful state clean making you a new creature in Christ. (Jack Arnold)