

Marriage issues

1 Corinthians 7: 1 – 16

This chapter is not a teaching on marriage but Paul is answering particular questions that the Corinthian Christians had concerning marriage.

1) Is it good for a person to be celibate? (vs. 1 – 9)

- Paul was addressing the issue of celibacy. The text could read “You say that a man does well not to marry.”
- It is possible that certain teachers had been to Corinth and forbade people to marry.
- 1 Timothy 4: 3 “They forbid people to marry...”
- Although this is written to Timothy in Ephesus the same teaching was probably doing its rounds.
- Paul claimed that celibacy is good but marriage is better because of the extent of immorality in the world.
- However we must not get the idea that it is only the single people that face temptation. Married people also face sexual temptation and that is why Paul exhorts them not to deprive each other except by mutual consent.
- In a marriage course in India the counsellor told everyone that if we eat good biriyani until we are satisfied then when someone comes along with some tempting dessert we won't want it because we have been satisfied. So we need to satisfy ourselves only with our spouses so we won't be tempted by anyone else.
- Paul concludes by saying that it is good for those who aren't married to remain unmarried, however not everyone has the gift of celibacy as he had.
- A single person who has constant sexual yearnings does not have the gift of celibacy
- Sexual desire is natural and marriage is provided for its fulfillment.
- But, note, sexual fulfillment is not the only reason for marriage.

2) Is divorce permitted to Christians? (vs.10 – 11)

- No. A wife must not separate from her husband and a husband must not divorce his wife.
- If they do get divorced they should remain unmarried or be reconciled to one another.
- Matthew 19: 3 – 12 Jesus on divorce
 - At the beginning the Creator made them male and female
 - The two will become one flesh
 - What God has joined together let man not separate
 - Anyone who gets divorced and remarries commits adultery
 - Exception for divorce and remarriage – marital unfaithfulness.

3) What about marriage and divorce with a Christian and an unbeliever? (12 – 16)

- Let us take note that this is a case where one person in the marriage relationship converted to become a Christian.
- This is not promoting Christian single people to marry unbelievers.
 - 2 Corinthians 6: 14 – 15 “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 harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?”
- If the unbelieving spouse is willing to live with the believing spouse then the believing spouse must not divorce him/her.
- The unbelieving spouse has been sanctified through the believing spouse i.e. Treated as in a special relationship with God solely for the purpose of marriage but not made personally holy as he/she is still unsaved.
- Children in such a marriage are similarly covered.
- v.14 The Message “Otherwise, your children would be left out; as it is, they also are included

in the spiritual purposes of God.”

- If the unbeliever leaves let him/her leave. This is another ground on which a Christian may divorce his/her spouse.
- Many Christians hang on to their unbelieving spouses hoping for their salvation.
- Paul answers this by saying, “How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”
- vs15 & 16 The Message “On the other hand, if the unbelieving spouse walks out, you've got to let him or her go. You don't have to hold on desperately. God has called us to make the best of it, as peacefully as we can. You never know, wife: The way you handle this might bring your husband not only back to you but to God. You never know, husband: The way you handle this might bring your wife not only back to you but to God.”

Let Go and Let God!