

WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-9

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

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.

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.

But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. 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.

But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

I'd like to start with, what is to me, a profound statement, "*The devil will do all he can... to entice unmarried couples into having sex, **and** to prevent married couples from having sex.*" He's that sinister!

If you're dating, or married to someone else, Satan will try to get you in the *sack* - he knows sexual immorality will *sack* your faith, and create real trouble in your life.

And if you're married, the devil tries to keep you on opposite sides of the *bed*, for he knows your love and commitment will be *fed* by a mutually satisfying sex life.

These truths outline Paul's thoughts at the end of 1 Corinthians 6, and on into the beginning of Chapter 7...

Paul closes Chapter 6 warning the Corinthian believers to flee sexual immorality. *And why?* He says in verse 20, "You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

God cares about what we do with our bodies. Jesus paid a steep price to purchase your body for God.

Greek dualism taught that the human body was only a shell. The body is nothing more than wrapping paper. The prize is inside! The inner man, your spirit, is what matters to God... *But the Corinthians abused this notion.*

Some of the believers thought that if they were pure and pleasing to God on the inside, it didn't really matter what they did on the outside - *in their body*. They could have sex with whomever and whenever they pleased.

And this is an excuse we hear today... "We love each other. Our hearts are pure. We're soulmates. If we're committed in our hearts, it doesn't matter what we do with our bodies." And to that, God says, "You're wrong!"

He does care about what we do with our body. He bought us at a steep price - the blood of His only Son.

And now He doesn't want you to use your body for sexual immorality. God wants you to use it in ways that glorify Him. Paul writes in verse 20, "**glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**" God cares about both - how we use both *our spirit* and *our body*.

Paul carries this theme over into Chapter 7. God created the human body *with a sexual energy*. He knows us. We have a sex drive. God made us with urges.

Sometimes we forget that God created sex!

Did you know there's a whole book of the Bible devoted to sexual expression in marriage? The Song of Solomon has everything going on except Barry White singing in the background. It's an Oriental love poem!

The Bible teaches that God intends for sex in marriage to be sensual and satisfying... Hey, God is no prude!

After a careful anatomical survey of the bodies of both males and females, it's not difficult to imagine how God designed the parts to fit together. *Hey, we connect!*

God made our bodies with *sexual compatibility and desires*. And along with the anatomy, God has a plan!

He made sex for marriage.

Think about it, God created fire, but fire belongs in the fireplace, not in the middle of the living room floor. In the fireplace it provides warmth, and heat, and light. In the living room floor it'll burn your house to the ground.

And so it is with sex... God *created our bodies* - He's *purchased our bodies* - and He doesn't want us using our bodies for sexual immorality. Our sexuality was made to burn in the fireplace of heterosexual marriage.

Remember, according to 5:9 Paul had written to the Corinthians once before. Apparently, their reply included several questions... *some practical, some doctrinal...*

Actually, that's what the rest of this letter is about - the answers to the questions Paul was asked... *eating meats sacrifices to idols, gender roles in the church, the observance of communion, spiritual gifts, the resurrection...* were the issues that concerned them.

And the Corinthians had some questions about relationships... *marriage, divorce, singleness*. This is what Paul speaks of in our text today, 1 Corinthians 7.

He begins in verse 1, **“Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*”** Realize, Paul isn't talking about hugging your mom, or your sister, or even *a sister in Christ* at church.

Women don't have cooties. Guys and gals can brush up against each other... No, when Paul says, **“*It's good for a man not to touch a woman...*”** he means sexually.

Yes, God created sex and marriage. It's a good thing, but Paul says if God leads a Christian to forego married life, that too can be a good, valid, spiritual option.

There's no shame in being single.

And this was an important point, *given the era and the culture in which Paul wrote*. In ancient times marriage was a given, especially among the Jews. Something was wrong with you if you *chose* not to marry. Even today, there're few Synagogues with a "Singles Ministry."

God told Adam to "be fruitful and multiply" - thus, Jews considered a *chosen celibacy* to be a sin against God. If a Jew chose to be single he was excluded from heaven.

But this wasn't God's conclusion. When He created marriage He said that it was *good*... But it depends on the person. There are folks who aren't the marrying-type, and if they forego marriage that can also be *good*.

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus spoke of people who have such a calling... "Eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." To be more singly devoted to God they chose not to marry.

This was the calling on the Prophet Jeremiah's life.

Later in Chapter 7 Paul tells us that he also chose to be single, so he could devote himself exclusively to God and the work of God... Paul says the married man cares about the things of this world - *a mortgage, kids, oil changes, honeymoons*. His family responsibilities gobble up a lot of his time, and can distract him from a ministry. *A spouse can louse up your service for God.*

On occasion and for some people, singleness is God's will. For some folks sexual appetite isn't a problem. They have no burning desire to be married.

They can take it or leave it. Life seems just as appealing to

them flying solo, as it does in getting married. If this is the case, Paul calls it a *good thing*.

For a brief moment, I thought God might be calling me to singleness; then I met Kathy, *and she looked so fine...* I figured if I was meant to be single, God wouldn't want me feeling the way I felt about her...

With Kathy, I figured whatever distractions she might cause, would be worth the trouble. And I was right.

I believe if God calls you to be *single*, He'll take away the *tingle*. And when I was with Kath I was *tingling* all over. Singleness has to be a gift from God. If you don't have this enabling, don't pretend. You'll be miserable.

If the sight of a pretty girl races a man's pulse and heats up his hormones - then God hasn't blessed him with the gift of singleness. *He needs to find a wife...*

If a lady goes to sleep dreaming of a Prince Charming - a man who'll sweep her off her feet and give her a happy home - then neither does she have the gift of singleness. *She needs a husband...*

You either have this gift or you don't... And if you don't - if you have a strong sexual desire for intimacy with a member of the opposite sex, then get married!

In our text here in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul's intent is not to write a treatise on marriage. He gives a more comprehensive teaching on the subject in Ephesians 5.

Elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that marriage is far more than sex... But here in 1 Corinthians, he's answering

questions, and the subject on the minds of the Corinthians was singleness and sexual desire.

And Paul tells us, if your body's constitution desires a sex *life* - then the answer for you is a good *wife*.

So graduate. Get a job. Find a woman. Build some character. Put an end to your foolishness. Stop being a boy and be a man. Flee immorality and get married.

In 1966 Percy Sledge released a song that rose to #1 on the Billboard charts. In fact, Rolling Stone magazine ranks it *the 54th greatest song of all time*. I'd put it a little higher. *The song...* "[When A Man Loves A Woman.](#)"

(play clip) There it is, "[When a man loves a woman, can't keep his mind on nothing else...](#)" And this is why Paul writes in verse 2, "[Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.](#)" Fellows, *if you love a woman and can't think of nothing else* - then make that woman your wife. And ladies, *if you love a man and can't think of nothing else* - then take him as your husband.

Don't do it irresponsibly... Men, before you marry that girl make sure you can provide for her and support her. If you can't, then get yourself in a position where you can.

And ladies, before you marry a man make sure you're willing to trust him, follow him, and build a life together.

But God's plan is marriage, not sexual immorality - *not porn, or romance novels, or soap operas, or an affair, or steamy chatrooms, or flirting with co-workers...* Marriage is God's way of fulfilling your body's sexual desires.

Don't just pursue sex, aspire to marriage.

Husbands, you are God's means of satisfying your wife's desire for physical intimacy... And wives, you are God's gift to serve your husband's sexual needs...

Paul says it this way, verse 3, "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband." The Greek word "*affection*" isn't merely holding hands, or a kiss on the cheek. It's a word used to describe the conjugal rights of married people.

It certainly included affection of a lighter and lessor variety like holding hands, or a kiss, or a gentle caress.

And sex in marriage should be more than a let's-get-down-to-business attitude - just do the deed. A husband particularly, needs to show his wife sensitivity, and patience, and kindness... He needs to be *affectionate*.

But here the word implies more than a pat on the back. When Paul writes "*affection*" - He's talking sex.

And notice, it's "*due.*" *It's owed.*

Sure it should be a blessing, a joy, a thrill, a gift - *all the above*. It's a celebration of love between two married people. As we learned last week, sex carries with it spiritual connotations. It binds us on the deepest levels.

But first and foremost, sex in marriage is an obligation.

If you're a married person you "owe" your spouse sexual favors and intimacy. Sex in marriage is a bill that comes due... *And for me, I'm happy to pay up! I'm very conscientious. I never*

want to be negligent paying a bill. Hey, I like to make my payments on time, every time.

The Bible teaches that all married people owe it to their spouse to have loving, passionate, frequent sex.

As long as you and your spouse are reasonably fit; then you should expect sexual interest and expression from your spouse... And even where there is a health challenge, some form of affection is usually still possible.

The point is, the Bible knows nothing of a sexless marriage. Sex in marriage is a Christian's duty!

For Paul also tells us in verse 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."**

Now, I'm sure there's some selfish, sex-crazed husband somewhere who has misused this verse as a biblical endorsement for a kinky or perverted demand.

When Paul writes, **"the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does,"** he's not turning the wife into her husband's personal sex toy.

A wife is not to be *used* or *abused* for a husband's selfish, lustful gratification. Ephesians 5:25 describes what should be every married man's motivation, **"Love your wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it."** Husbands should love their wives unselfishly and sacrificially. Love her in a way that *cleanses her mind*, and *purifies her heart*, and *ennobles her spirit* - not in a way that pollutes, or damages, or exploits her.

Anything Paul expects of a husband and wife is definitely in the context of a loving, and respectful, and willing arrangement. *But love does carry expectations.*

Paul says when two people marry their bodies are no longer their own. They've agreed to share their bodies.

Kathy's curvaceous, toned, squeeze-ably soft, amazingly beautiful body now belongs to yours truly.

My hairy, rough, scarred, over-weight body belongs to her... *Guess who got the better end of that deal!*

But this is how God wants us to function in marriage. A husband and wife have a claim on each others' body.

I'd like to sport a beard, or a mustache, but Kathy doesn't like getting scratched when I kiss her, *sooooo do you see any hair on my face?* Absolutely not, it's her face... She hasn't said so lately, but I know she'd like her body to drop a few pounds... So I'm trying.

And likewise, Kathy's body belongs to me. I, like most men, are visually-oriented, which means I like to see my body as often as possible. So Kathy is willing to forego her natural modesty as she changes clothes or takes a shower, to show her husband his body.

This is how a good marriage thinks... our bodies are not our own. We share them with our spouse.

In the OKJ version, verse 3 reads, "Let the husband render unto the wife due **benevolence**: and likewise also the wife unto the husband." Rather than "*the affection due*" - it's "*due benevolence.*" When I hear the term "benevolence" I think of

charity, even pity. *Benevolence* isn't a payment, but a handout, a gift.

And sometimes the marital affection I receive from my wife is like benevolence on *her* part. If she gave me what I deserve I might get a handshake or a head-nod.

But that's just it, sex in marriage should never be a reward for good behavior... nor should we ever withhold sex from our spouse as a punishment...

Sex is to marriage what carbonation is to a Coca-cola. It's just part of it - whether you think it's deserved or not. Sex is what *YOU* owe - it's not necessarily what your spouse deserves. "*Render... due benevolence.*"

Paul even says in verse 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." When you deprive each other and withhold sex from your spouse you give Satan an opportunity to work mischief in your marriage!

Every married couple needs to realize that sex is **a tool to build with** - not **a weapon to fight with**.

If you deprive one another and withhold sex as a form of punishment, you're disobeying God... If you use sex to reward your spouse for a behavior you like, or use sex to bribe him or her for what you want - that's *manipulation*, not *affirmation*... That's a cruel use of what should be an expression of committed love.

Pastor Charlie Shedd wrote a series of very wise letters to

his daughter before she married. Here's one of his best, "Dear Karen, smart girls don't ration their men... Your husband needs sex even when it may be the farthest thing from your mind. Convince him, if you can, that you love him so much you enjoy sharing your charms with him simply because he's in the mood for more." *Don't ration!* Ladies, sex is your opportunity to minister blessing to your husband as only you can!

We all do things we don't feel like doing at the time. Responsible adults take their obligations seriously.

Some things just need to be done! Moms feed, and bathe, and clothe their kids whether they're in the mood or not... Dads, overlook their aches and pains and preferences to get out of bed and head to work...

And wives, there may be moments when your husband needs you... *and you're not in the mood!*

Does a husband need to be sensitive to his wife? *Yes!* Does he need to give her a break on occasion? *Yes!* And come back at a more opportune time? *Yes!*

But wives, is it your obligation to be with him even in those moments when you aren't in the mood? *Yes!*

Here's a clip from the TV show, "Everybody Loves Raymond." *It shows what happens all too often. (clip)*

Ladies, how easy is it for you to say, "no?" Has your "no" become automatic? Has your husband come to anticipate that your first response to him will be a "no?"

Paul says, "Do not deprive... except with consent for a time..." A couples' default should be "Yes." "No" should be the

exception. *“Do not deprive... except.”*

Forgoing sex should always be a mutual decision. Both partners should be in agreement, and even then only for *“a time.”* The implication is *a very short time.*

Paul mentions one potential reason for suspending sexual activity in a marriage, *“prayer and fasting.”*

Think of it, sex requires that you have some energy. Energy requires a hearty meal - so fasting and sex might be at odds. Thus, if a married couple wants to take a few nights off, and devote those evenings to *prayer and fasting*, great. But notice the emphasis, it needs to be with mutual consent and only for a time.

God is saying that sex in marriage is so important, that *He doesn't want your prayer and fasting if it comes at the expense of your spouse and their needs.*

Wives, your husband goes out into a sex-obsessed world every single day. Even if he's a good and godly man, you need to remember he has not been blessed with the gift of celibacy! That's why he married you.

If he had a *low libido* he wouldn't have gotten married, he'd be somewhere singly serving the Lord, *or fishing*. I'm sure he married you for many wonderful reasons - but trust me, not the least of which was sex.

Your husband needs a holy, healthy sexual outlet.

He's taken sexual immorality off the table, and he's chosen marriage - he's chosen you! He has committed to forego relations with all other women in the world to cultivate a

fulfilling and satisfying relationship with you.

A wise wife doesn't ignore the obvious! Loving, passionate, **and frequent** sex with his wife is what takes the sexual pressure off a husband. The temptations aren't as strong if a husband knows he's got all the feminine affection he can handle at home.

Did you hear about the family who wanted to move from a cramped condo into a spacious new home?

They had a little girl, and they needed more room.

As they toured a prospective house the daughter got excited. She saw a third bedroom. "Mommy, this house is perfect! There's enough bedrooms, you and Daddy won't have to share anymore!" Well, God is saying just the opposite. A husband and wife shouldn't just share the same room, they need to share the same bed...

And they need to cuddle so close it leaves no room for the devil between them... When a wife neglects her husband's sexual needs a deep resentment, even a bitterness, brews in his heart... *When she uses sex to keep her man on a short leash... When he has to beg... When he's constantly rejected... It eats at him.*

A man might not even realize it, or give it words, but the hurt is there. It lurks. A seed of despair takes root, and waits for a situation to come along for it to sprout.

A woman at the office gives him some attention. A girl at church shows an interest in *his needs*. I'm not excusing a man for yielding to temptation. It's a sin if he does, and he'll have to suffer the consequences...

A wife's neglect doesn't justify her husband's sin, but it does help explain it - and it might've been avoided if she had been more attentive to his sexual desires.

Paul says, **“Do not deprive one another.. so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”** *Is it time to bring your hubby out of the cold?*

Remember how I started, **“Satan does all he can to get an unmarried couple to have sex, and he does all he can to keep a married couple from having sex.”**

Verse 6, **“But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. For I wish that all men were even as I myself (that is single). But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.”**

Paul is not commanding anybody to get married.

In fact, he sticks by his opening statement, **“It is good for a man not to touch a woman.”** Paul was single, and he'd learned that it has some definite advantages. He will mention them in more detail later in the chapter.

We know from Acts 7 that Paul had been a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin or Supreme Court. And to sit on the Court you had to be married and have children.

I believe Paul was once married... Perhaps his wife died... Or it could be she was as devout a Pharisee as he'd been and she left him after he converted to Christ.

Whether Paul was a widower or a divorcee we're not sure, but he was single and considered it God's gift.

It's interesting everyone in this room today, whether you're married right now or not, has or will be single.

We were all single at one time... Some of us will always be single... And some of us will be single again.

But the point is none of us should look on singleness as a negative. If God has you single, there's a reason. *He's not punishing you. He hasn't abandoned you.* Singleness is *His gift*, and you should see it as such.

There's one thing worse than being single, and that's being married to the wrong person! Until Mr. or Mrs Right comes along view your singleness as God's gift.

I think it's important to remember that our Lord was single. Jesus was *God incarnate*. God came to earth in a man named Jesus to become personally acquainted with the human experience. *And Jesus never married.*

That means you can be fully human, fully alive - you can live a rich, wonderful life - without being married.

Realize, being married doesn't make a person more spiritual than being single... And despite what some believers in Corinth were saying - despite what Roman Catholics have taught through the centuries - being celibate, or single, doesn't make you more spiritual or closer to God than being married... Both *being married* and *being single* have their own perks and privileges.

The Bible teaches both marriage and singleness are callings from God, and each person has their own gift.

And thus in verse 6, Paul isn't proposing marriage as a "*commandment*." Rather he calls it a "*concession*." It's God's refuge for a strong, healthy sexual desire.

No one has to get married! God doesn't stick the barrel of a shotgun in your back to get you to the altar.

But if you do marry; realize you're taking on an obligation to be sexually involved with your spouse. Married folks remember, *the vow comes with a wow!*

And then verse 8, "*But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am...*" We don't know for sure, but the fact Paul mentions "*widows*" lends support to the theory that his wife had died, and that he was now a widower.

But however Paul became single, he enjoyed the freedom and opportunities that it now provided him.

And he knows singleness isn't for everyone. Verse 9, "*But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*"

The phrase "*burn with passion*" means "*to glow with heat*." There are moments when all men get a little hot under the collar. We see a pretty girl. The pulse races.

Hopefully, it's *a controlled burn*. You feel the heat for a moment, but you lean in to God, and trust His Spirit, and use some self-control... It passes. You're cool.

But if you're walking around in a glow - *in heat* all the time - frustrated and discombobulated - *then love a woman and marry her. It's better to marry than to burn.*

And once you get married make sure *your* spouse isn't glowing any longer! Make sure he burns out at home. Sex in marriage should be *fun, fulfilling, freely participated in,* and perhaps most important, *frequent.*

Sometimes married couples ask, *how often is frequent?* And the Bible doesn't say! It depends on the needs and drives of each couple. We're all different.

I will say, I know of very few couples who have too much sex! More common that not, couples allow stress, and schedules, and busy-ness, and tiredness, and bitterness to rob them of their marital pleasures.

I'll be honest, I've counseled a few couples where I told them, "The best thing you can do for your marriage is to forget about what's bugging you, go into your bedroom, lock the door, get naked, and start kissing..."

God has given to marriages a powerful gift that bonds us and seals our commitment to each other. You should use sex to its fullest to benefit your marriage!

As for sexual frequency, Kathy and I, have set aside days that begin with "T": Tuesdays and Thursdays, Thaturdays and Thundays, even today and tomorrow!

Don't ever think *celibacy* is more spiritual than *sexuality*. That's simply not true. Sex is a beautiful, God-ordained gift reserved for the marriage bed.

If God has given you a sex drive, then realize your body is not for sexual immorality. "When a man loves a woman, (and)

can't keep his mind on nothing else..." he should start preparing himself for marriage!...

Finish your education, get a good job, move out on your own, learn some responsibility, become a man...

Of course, this might take some time, so while your single you should learn to resist temptation, and exercise some self-control, and seek to be content.

I think you'll find that *happily married people were once happily single people*. Truly happy people find their joy in Jesus regardless of their circumstances.

But all the while you're single, be praying for a spouse. Be on the look-out for the right person!

It's good for a man not to touch a woman, *but marriage is also good*. It's God's provision for relieving sexual pressure...

"It is better to marry than to burn."