

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-40

Did you hear about the woman who'd been married to four men... Her first husband was a **millionaire**...

Her second husband was a **film producer**...

The third man in her life was a **butler**...

And her fourth husband was a **funeral director**... A *millionaire, a filmmaker, a butler, and a mortician*...

Of course, the woman explained her choice in men as follows... **"It was one for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four to go."**

Well, believe it or not, that's a good lead-in to tonight's Bible study. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul deals with the subjects of marriage, divorce, and singleness.

He addresses **marriage** in verses 1-9 - **divorce** in verses 10-24 - and **singleness** in verses 25-40.

There's something for us all in tonight's text.

Up to this point, in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he's addressed problems that had existed in their church.

The believers in Corinth were divisive... They were prideful and carnal... In the name of tolerance, they overlooked blatant sin... Unable to settle their own disputes, they were suing each other in secular court...

And like the immoral surroundings of their pagan city, the believers also had lax sexual standards... *Paul had taken the Church to task on these subjects and more!*

But now in Chapter 7, he answers questions that had been posed by the Corinthians. Apparently, these last 10 chapters of his letter make up Paul's response to previous correspondence. He begins with marriage...

Verse 1, "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*" Here, the Greek word translated "*touch*" refers to "an act of intimacy, to touch in a sexual way."

So here's the Apostle Paul's first point about the institution of marriage... **It's good that you avoid it!**

In Genesis 2:18, God said, "It is not good that man should be alone." And His answer for our loneliness was marriage. Yet here, the Holy Spirit says through Paul, "*It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*"

Which is it? How should we feel about marriage?

It reminds me of an old saying, "Marriage means showers for the bride, and curtains for the groom."

People have read Chapter 7 and accused Paul of having a negative attitude toward marriage. That's an unfair conclusion. Paul's comments here are not intended to be a comprehensive examination of marriage. This is a reply to questions he's been asked.

If you want the unabridged version of "*Paul on Marriage*", read **Ephesians 5:22-33** where he exalts marriage by proclaiming it to be a picture of Christ's relationship with His Church... Read too, **Hebrews 13:4** where Paul assures us that sex in marriage is pure and holy... Also read **1 Timothy**

4:3 where he lists "forbidding to marry" as a mark of apostasy...

When you consider the totality of Paul's teaching, there is no contradiction. Generally speaking, Genesis 2 is right... "It is not good that a man should be alone."

Yet there are under unique circumstances and specific cases, where 1 Corinthians 7 is also right. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."

Paul goes on in verse 2, "Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband."

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus speaks of people with *the gift of celibacy*. He refers to them as "Eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." I believe there is **a gift of singleness**.

For some people, sexual appetite isn't a problem. They have no burning desire or need to get married.

They can take it or leave it. To them, life seems just as appealing flying solo as it does getting married.

Later in Chapter 7, Paul emphasizes that for a Christian, singleness can actually be an advantage. Singles aren't distracted by many of the concerns that preoccupy married people. In essence, *a single-Christian can be more single-ly devoted to the Lord.*

But, either you've got this gift or you don't! Don't over-spiritualize. It's easy to know if you have it or not.

If the sight of a pretty girl causes a man's pulse to race and his hormones to heat up, then God hasn't blessed him with

the gift of singleness. He needs a wife... If a lady goes to sleep dreaming of a Prince Charming with whom she can live happily-ever-after, then she doesn't have the gift of singleness...

If you're *"the marrying type"*, then it's best that you get married. If you don't, your desire for physical intimacy with the opposite sex could lead you into sexual sin.

Verse 3, *"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."* When Kathy and I married, we made a swap. Her soft, curvaceous, beautiful body became mine. And my hairy, ugly, portly body became hers.

What a deal for me! Maybe not so much for her.

But now, a big part of my marital responsibility is to meet her sexual needs. And part of her responsibility is to meet mine. Paul says we are to *"render the affection due."* The Greek word translated *"due,"* means *"owed."*

A married person owes it to their spouse to engage in sex lovingly, and passionately, and **frequently.**

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

When Paul says, *"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 selfish gratification.

Ephesians 5:25 explains what should be a married man's motivation. "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it." God calls husbands to love their wife unselfishly and sacrificially.

Love in a way that cleanses her mind and purifies her heart, not in a way that pollutes or damages.

But marital love does carry with it a sexual expectation. As long as both partners are physically fit, it's not unreasonable to expect sexual interest and expression from your spouse.

It's a Christian's duty!

For Paul says to married couples 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."

The one legitimate excuse for not having sex is fasting and prayer - not "I'm too busy," or "I'm too tired." The consent to forego sex should be mutual consent.

Did you hear about the couple who were moving from a cramped condo into a spacious new home? They had a little girl now and needed more room.

As they toured a prospective house the daughter saw a third bedroom. She got excited. She whispered, "Mom, this house is perfect! There are enough bedrooms here so you and Daddy won't have to share!"

Well, Paul is saying, mom and dad *need* to share the same bed regularly. Marital sex should be **frequent**.

Always remember the devil's strategy, "He does all he can to encourage you to have sex before you get married. Then he does all he can to discourage you from having sex after you get married."

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

If you withhold sex as a means of punishing your spouse, you're disobeying God... Use sex to reward your husband for a behavior you like or bribe him 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 letters to his daughter before she married. He advises her...

"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."

Wives, your husband goes out into a sex-obsessed world daily, and he has not been blessed with the gift of celibacy. If he had, he wouldn't have married you.

If he had a *low sexual libido*, he probably wouldn't have gotten married; he'd be *single-ly serving* God.

I'm sure sex wasn't the only reason he married you, but trust me, it was a big reason. He needs a holy, healthy sexual

outlet, and he's committed to forego all other women to cultivate that relationship with his wife.

A wise woman doesn't ignore the obvious...

Loving, and passionate, and **frequent** sex with his wife is what takes the sexual pressure off a husband.

The temptations aren't as strong if a man knows he has all the feminine affection he can handle at home.

Verse 6, "But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment." Hey, you don't have to get married.

Paul says marriage is not a "commandment," it's a "concession" to healthy human sexual desires.

According to Scripture, nobody has to marry, but if you do, remember the **vow** comes with a **wow**. Be faithful to the obligation you've made to your spouse.

Verse 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." Both singleness and marriage are gifts from God and should be used for His glory. Paul's gift happened to be singleness...

"But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am..." There are those who have questioned Paul's marital status. *Was he a widower? A divorcee? Or just never married?*

Though we're not certain, there are clues...

In Philippians 3, Paul says that according to Jewish Law he was "blameless." It would be hard to say that if he'd never

been married. The Jews said there are seven people God won't accept, and at the top of their list was a man who had never married... Second, was a man with no children. Of the 613 Jewish Laws number one was the command to repopulate the Earth.

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

It's my opinion that Paul had been married with kids at one time, but upon his conversion to Christ, his wife deserted him. In some Orthodox Jewish homes today, if a family member becomes a Christian they hold a religious funeral. The Christian convert is divorced from the community, stripped of his inheritance, and considered dead. This might've happened to Paul.

However Paul got there, at the time he wrote to the Corinthians, he was single - *yet he knows singleness is not for everyone*. He emphasizes this again in verse 9, "But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

Once a pastor's sermon was entitled, "*Great Sex For Christians*." He began, "Brothers and sisters, sex is great on days that start with the letter "T" - Tuesday, Thursday, Thaturday, Thunday - today and tomorrow."

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

If God has given you a normal sex drive; then your goal should be to position yourself for marriage...

Here's what you do... *Graduate from High School, get a job, move out from mom...* This might take a little time, so while you're single, learn to resist temptation and gain some self-control... and then pray for a spouse, be on the look-out for the right person... then when you find them, have some faith and get married.

Marriage is God's means to relieve sexual pressure. As Paul puts it, *"It is better to marry than to burn."*

Remember, Paul is answering questions that have been posed to him by the Corinthians. So having dealt with marriage in verse 10, he tackles the subject of divorce. *"Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband."*

Malachi 2:16 is the Bible's definitive word on divorce, *"The Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce."*

And Paul echoes that in 1 Corinthians 7.

He continues, *"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."* In Matthew 19:8, our Lord Jesus acknowledged the reality of divorce.

He credited it to the hardness of man's heart.

Moses laid out in God's Law stipulations governing divorce to make it more difficult. God's laws were to discourage divorce and minimize the damage it would cause - but divorce *was never*, and *is never* God's ideal. With God, no marital problem is unsolvable.

This is why according to verse 11 if a spouse departs the marriage, he or she has two options: **remain unmarried or be reconciled to their estranged spouse.**

If you divorce your spouse ***without a biblical justification***, it's a sin. Sometimes a cooling off period or a temporary separation can be beneficial - *but it needs to be followed by a sincere effort at restoration.*

Verse 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. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.”**

A side note, don't trip up over Paul's phraseology. He says, **“I, not the Lord...”** Several times in Chapter 7, it sounds as if he's downgrading his counsel from **divine inspiration** to **mere opinion**. That's not what he means.

If what he wrote wasn't inspired by God's Spirit, it wouldn't have ended up in the pages of Scripture.

Generally, Paul's writings run parallel to the teachings of Jesus. But there were certain subjects Paul addressed that Jesus did not deal with directly.

And here's an example. For most of Jesus' ministry, *there were no believers*. His own disciples didn't truly believe until after His resurrection. Thus, Jesus had little opportunity to address the subject of a believer married to an unbeliever. That meant on this issue Paul couldn't write, **“The Lord said...”** or **“Jesus told us...”**

Yet the Corinthians were facing this challenge and desperately needed wisdom. Thus, through the process of biblical inspiration, the Holy Spirit provided them the counsel they needed through the pen of Paul.

And here are Paul's instructions...

If you're a believer who happens to be married to an unbeliever, and your spouse rejects the Lord... **that doesn't give you the right to reject your spouse.** If he or she wants to stay married; then you stay put.

This addresses a common problem in the first century... The Bible is clear that a believer should never marry an unbeliever. 2 Corinthians 6 tells us that this is like hitching together two species of animal in the same harness. It makes for **an unequal yoke.**

A Christian and a non-Christian have two different natures. Harness them together and there's bound to be tension. There's an old Puritan proverb that says, **"If you're a child of God, and you marry a child of the devil, you're going to have problems with your father-in-law."**

And what would be the best way to avoid marrying an unbeliever? How about **not dating him!** The sign at the start of the Alaskan Highway reads, **"Choose your rut carefully, you'll be in it for the next 200 miles."**

When you marry someone, you're choosing your rut.

With some wisdom, you can extrapolate where it'll lead. Thus, while you're single, be careful. Christian marriage is until death do you part, *happy or not.*

But here's what often occurred in the first century...

Many of the first Christians were married before they heard the Gospel. Thus, the Gospel became a wedge issue. Some spouses converted. Others did not.

And here Paul tells the Christians, if their unconverted spouse wants to remain married to them, they should remain in the relationship... *here's why...*

“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.”

Understand, what Paul isn't saying... He's not teaching that the unbelieving spouse or kids will get to heaven on the coattails of the believing spouse. **Salvation is not by proxy.**

The words **"sanctified"** and **"holy"** are the same Greek word **"hagios"** or **"to set apart."** The word speaks of position and opportunity. Paul is saying when a believer remains married to an unbeliever, the light of God continues to shine into the dark life of the unbeliever and into the lives of their kids. *Christian witness and wisdom* remain a constant influence.

Thus, the believer's involvement ensures a degree of spiritual safety for the family and enhances the likelihood of the spouse and kids' ultimate salvation.

If you're a believer married to an unbeliever, it gets tough. Imagine a three-legged race. **Adult dads tied to short, chubby 9-year-old children. It's amusing to watch the mismatched pairs awkwardly stumble along.**

But this is what every day looks like for a believer married to an unbeliever. Permanently attached to a person of *uneven*

stature and *unequal stamina*. Often the believer carries an inordinate share of the load.

Such a life isn't easy, but if it means the eternal salvation of your family; *then it's worth it!* If this is your life, God loves you, and He will give you strength!

Verse 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.

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?" Again, a believer in Jesus should not depart as long as the unbeliever wants to stay married - but if the unbeliever chooses to depart, then the believer is no longer under bondage.

He or she is then free to move on with their lives.

Thus, there are two biblical scenarios where God permits divorce and remarriage. The first is in Matthew 5:32, "Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery..."

Note the exception, "pornea" or "sexual immorality."

And the word is a broad one. It includes all illicit sexual activity - *homosexuality, adultery, pornography*.

If a person falls into **persistent sexual misconduct**, their spouse is free to divorce and remarry.

It's not commanded. The offended spouse can choose to forgive and restore the marriage, but it's an option God makes available to the wounded spouse.

In the OT, an adulterer was stoned to death, making the victim a widow and free to remarry. In the NT, God has mercy on the adulterer but still affords a betrayed victim the same freedom to move on and start over.

The second biblical justification for divorce and remarriage is **desertion**. Here Paul says, *"If the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases"* If you've been deserted by a spouse because of your faith in Jesus and righteous conduct, then you have the prerogative to move on with your life and remarry in the will of God.

The Greek word translated *"depart"* means *"to put room between."* It speaks of a definite departure.

A husband who ignores his wife and watches too much football is guilty of insensitivity, not desertion. A wife who spends too much time and money at the mall is disrespectful, but she hasn't departed the marriage.

Yet, are there more grievous betrayals that do count as desertion? I believe there are... A husband who repeatedly beats his wife or kids... Or a wife strung out on drugs who refuses to get help... People might come home at night and sleep under the same roof, *but does that mean they're still committed to the marriage?*

Not hardly! After 38 years as a pastor, I've concluded that there are lots of ways to depart a marriage without actually vacating the premises and filing for a divorce.

Certainly, these questions are problematic, and I'd never want to give a person in a difficult marriage a loophole to disobey God and opt for the easy way out.

If the unbeliever wants to remain, then the believer should remain! *Hear me say it...* **You cannot divorce your spouse just because he or she is a jerk.**

But is desertion limited to the unbeliever packing his or her bags and actually seeking a change of address?... I don't think so. Here's where we need to be led by God's Spirit and be convinced in our heart.

Remember, the one certainty we started with, "God hates divorce." Let's take marriage seriously.

Verse 17 tells us, "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." Paul is addressing the subject of marriage. If you were married to Sam the Unbeliever when you got saved, then stay married to Sam. *You may just lead Sam to the Lord!*

But now, Paul takes this principle and applies it in a broader way. The principle is to **stay where you're called.** And this can apply to more than just marriage.

He writes, "Was anyone called while circumcised?"

Circumcision is the mark of a Jew. Paul is saying if you're born a Jew, "let him not become uncircumcised."

In other words, don't think following Christ will get easier by adopting Gentile customs.

“Was anyone called while uncircumcised?” In other words, *did you get saved while a Gentile?* “Let him not be circumcised.” Don’t think it’ll be easier living as a Jew.

Paul concludes, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.” Neither Gentile Christians or Jewish Christians have an advantage over the other. Both have challenges. Their culture matters little and has zero bearing with God.

Paul is saying, if you’re a Jew, be a believing Jew. If you’re a Gentile, be a believing Gentile. Changing your circumstances won’t make a life of faith any easier.

Start living for Jesus wherever you’ve been called!

Here’s a key to living the Christian life: **bloom where you're planted.** I hear people say, “When I find a wife, I’ll settle down and live for Jesus.” Or “When I get a new job, I’ll start being honest and ethical.” Or “We’re living together now, but when we get married, we’re going to start doing things God’s way.” No, no, a thousand times No! If you’re serious about following Jesus, **start doing things God’s way now - where He has you.**

If it takes moving out or in with a friend or informing your boss there’s certain stuff you’re no longer going to do; then so be it! Notice, verse 20 “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.”

Once, we had a guy come to Christ who was a distribution manager for Budweiser. He drove a company van, and at our Men’s Prayer Meeting, he’d park way down the street. We

didn't care, but he was embarrassed to park a beer truck in front of the church.

One day, he confessed to me his occupation... He was afraid we'd no longer accept him as a brother.

I told him, "Scott, God says start where you've been called, so we're going to help you be the best beer distributor you can possibly be for Jesus' sake."

I realized that might eventually cause a few problems for him. *It did.* Several months later, he resigned and got another job, but he started where he was called.

And this is what all Christians are expected to do.

Verse 21, **Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it.** Paul brings up the subject of slavery.

Understand, slavery was common in Corinth, In fact, the Roman Empire was built on the back of slave labor. No other civilization owned as many slaves as Rome.

And many of the early Christians came from the ranks of slaves. Yet, seldom did Paul and the early Church attack the evil of slavery head-on. **Christianity changed institutions by changing individual hearts.**

Here, Paul doesn't discourage a slave from using his newfound faith to gain his freedom. If he can, he should. Perhaps a master has an affinity for Christians!

But Paul tells the believing slave, even if his *freedom from sin* doesn't translate into *freedom from slavery* - don't let it stop him or her from living the Christian life.

Here's his point, begin your walk with the Lord wherever you're called... True happiness has nothing to do with our circumstances. Paul had met *happy slaves* and he'd met *sad owners*. Paul knows that happiness is the byproduct of a right relationship with God, not comfortable and cozy circumstances.

Verse 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. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.” *How liberating!*

It's not our physical circumstances that dictate our status. It's our spiritual relationship with Jesus! A slave who is a Christian is the freest of free men. And a free man who's a Christian is a slave to God's mercies.

He sums up this principle: “Brethren, let each one remain with God in that *state* in which he was called.”

As Christians, the road is not always easy. We can find ourselves in a prickly place, but Paul says to stay put.

There are lessons to learn. God has a reason. Stay where God has you until He issues your release.

Verse 25, “Now concerning virgins...” or “singles...”

In Paul's day and still today, in Christianity and in the church, sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage.

So to the single Christians, “I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy *has made* trustworthy.”

As we said earlier, in his language, Paul doesn't *abdicate* the authority of inspiration. He *indicates* he's tackling a subject that Jesus didn't directly address...

Verse 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: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife." And in the rest of the chapter, Paul will extol the virtues of singleness and a single lifestyle.

So, if you're single, these verses will provide hope and help. If you're married, *you didn't make a mistake*. Paul knows his Bible and sees value in marriage.

But based on "*the present distress*" as he calls it, he'll explain why marriage is not such a good idea.

This is where he goes in verse 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."

Several factors complicated life for the early Church.

First, was vicious persecution. The early Christians lived under the constant threat of bodily harm. Under such conditions, marriage could be an awful liability.

Think about it, a day at the office for Paul was preaching to hostile crowds - stirring up riots - getting flogged - prison time - or shipwrecked in the deep sea.

Ladies, what if you were married to Paul?...

It wouldn't be an easy life! "Honey, would you stop tracking your blood in on the carpets..." or "Pauly, honey, please talk to your angel about breaking you out of jail so you can be home by dinnertime..."

Voice of the Martyrs founder, Richard Wurmbrand, once told of a fellow pastor who had been persecuted by communists. They tried to torture him into denying Christ, but he stood firm in his faith *until they brought in his 14-year-old son* and began beating the boy unmercifully. It was all the poor pastor could handle.

He finally broke and verbally renounced his faith.

It's been said, "A man who is a hero himself is a coward when he thinks of his wife and children."

A married man is vulnerable to hardships in a way he wouldn't be if he were single. Paul's advice to married folk is to live with the liability. But if you're single, getting married can set you up for greater risk.

Verse 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, 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, and those who use this world as not misusing *it*. For the form of this world is passing away." Notice, Paul says, "*time is short.*" The early church lived as if Jesus were coming at any moment.

Paul streamlined his life so his only care was Christ. And he encourages married people to do the same.

Of course, Paul isn't suggesting we abandon our marital responsibilities. I've known people who have used their commitment to Christ as an excuse for neglecting their family. That's not what Paul advocates.

Don't stop loving your family, but neither turn them into an idol. Some Christian families are so busy catering to each other they never sacrifice for anyone else. Marriage's purpose is to serve God together.

Some couples *focus too much on the family*. The goal of a Christian family should be the glory of God.

Verse 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. But he who is married cares about the things of the world - how he may please *his wife*." A single person is free from distress, and he or she is also free from distraction...

When you get married, suddenly there are two sets of worries, and expenses, and demands, and interests, and perspectives... If I weren't married I wouldn't have to *maintain two cars - or hang Christmas lights - or purchase lipstick - or call home when I'm running late*.

I could spend all my time serving the Lord out witnessing to lost people on the golf course!

But now that I'm married, God commands me to go home and minister to my wife. One husband writes, "I didn't know what happiness was until I got married, but then it was too late..." *Hey, I'm thankful for my family.*

Marriage and family add to my life in incredible ways. My wife and kids are blessings from God.

But if you're single, why take on the extra baggage?

The other day I asked one of our college-aged fellows why he didn't have a girlfriend? He said, "I have a hard enough time putting up good grades now. What do you think it'd be like with a girl to please?" And that was Paul's attitude! In what he called "*the present distress*", a woman was a distraction he didn't need.

Verse 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."

A wife's big concern is pleasing her husband. *That's not always how it works out, but that's the ideal...*

Whereas, a single person can care about the things of the Lord. "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."

In Ephesians 5, Paul depicts marriage as a beautiful love story. But he isn't always so romantic. Here's a biblical picture of marriage that's not as flattering - he calls it "*a leash*." It's a dog collar designed to curtail your freedom. That sounds a little harsh, but it's true.

Marriage severely limits a person's autonomy.

In the next few verses, Paul speaks to either fathers of daughters or men who were pledged to a bride.

He's speaking to a culture where men dictated the future of their daughters and wives - i.e. *"their virgin."*

He writes, "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." If she is getting older and wants to marry; then let her. Marriage is not a sin.

"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. So then he who gives *her* in marriage does well, but he who does not give *her* in marriage does better." Again, Paul's point is clear. If you have the self-control to live a single life and serve the Lord without distraction; then good - it has its advantages.

Hear about the wedding at the bride's house? The ceremony began at 6:45, but the host forgot one detail.

Just as the pastor asked, "Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?" - a little bird slid from the mouth of the overhead clock and sounded, "cuckoo, cuckoo"... seven hilarious cuckoos...

Well, that sums up Paul's take on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. Why be cuckoo and forego your freedom to serve the Lord? Be single for the Savior!

Paul concludes, "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." A widow is

free to remarry, but all Christians should marry *“in the Lord”* that is *“to another Christian.”*

“But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment - and I think I also have the Spirit of God.” Again, God calls some to be single, and others to married. But He calls us all to **bloom where we're planted.** Whatever your status happens to be at the moment, do all that you do to the glory of God!