

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 6TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

THE RESPONSE (1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-9)

"NOW IN RESPONSE..."

Paul responds to questions and confusion concerning marriage and sexual immorality.

- The Corinthians wrote Paul about two extremes that were being practiced: **1)** there were some who justified prostitution **2)** there were some who thought the best way to avoid sexual immorality was to remain celibate whether married or not.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP STATUS IS A GIFT

Paul rightly views both singleness and marriage as a gift, so to offer clarity, he says that it is good for a person to have the gift of celibacy (unmarried), but the state of celibacy does not make someone better or more spiritual.

- **We cannot become prideful in the gift we have been given and we are not to covet another's gift over ours.**

SPECIALLY EQUIPPED TO SPEAK TO BOTH

Paul was qualified to speak to the gifts and responsibilities of both singleness and marriage.

- Paul would have been single when writing this letter and though we do not see a wife mentioned anywhere, we can assume that as an observant Jew and a member of the Sanhedrin, he would have been married at some point.

NOT A COMMAND TO MARRY

To combat the denial of sexual relations in a marriage as well as sexual immorality, Paul states that each man should have sexual relations with his own wife and vice versa.

- Paul is not saying this as command to marry, instead he is encouraging those that are married to continue in sexual relations with their spouse.

PROOFTEXTING CREATES INCOMPLETE TEACHING

Paul is not claiming that sex is the only reason or the most important reason for marriage.

- We must remember that Paul is addressing specific questions and not trying to give an exhaustive lesson on marriage. A more complete lesson on marriage can be found in Eph. 5:21-33 and Col. 3:18-19.

A NEW MINDSET TOWARDS WHAT IS "OWED"

Paul says, "we are to fulfill [our] marital duty," which means more than just sexual relations. Instead, it means **we are to give our spouse the affection that is owed to them.**

- There is a mutual obligation to one another with an emphasis on "giving." **We should adopt the mindset of "I owe you" instead of "you owe me."**

OBLIGATED TO "GIVE" NOT "DEMAND"

Paul is not condoning abuse or coercion of a spouse when he says, "we do not have authority over our bodies, but our spouse does."

- This means that **our obligation of giving to our spouse is so concrete, that it could be said that our bodies are not our own. The emphasis is on "giving" to our spouse versus "demanding" from our spouse.**

DO NOT ROB YOUR SPOUSE OF WHAT'S OWED

To reject the idea that a husband and wife could be more holy by abstaining, Paul says that harm can be done when we "**deprive**" our spouse, as Satan may tempt them.

- "**Robbing**" or "**cheating**" our spouse out of the affection that is due to them, gives the occasion for the "deprived" to look elsewhere for fulfillment.

PRAYER AND FASTING

Paul speaks to the exception which is in a time of prayer where abstinence is mutually agreed upon by both husband and wife.

- He offers this exception as a concession and not a command. He, by no means, commands abstinence in a marriage, but he does command that we are not to deprive our spouse.

"I WISH ALL PEOPLE WERE AS I AM."

Paul knew that the ideal choice was to remain single, as he was, but if the "unmarried and widowed" could not control themselves then they should marry.

- He essentially says that **marriage is not as advantageous as being unmarried, but it is better than "burning with desire."**

"BURNING WITH DESIRE"

Paul is stating that it is better to marry than to be "consumed by unfulfilled desire."

- Marriage is God's plan for the fulfillment of sexual desires, and the unmarried do not have an avenue to satisfy their desires outside of sinning. Additionally, **we must not think that marriage will solve a person's struggle with lust or sexual sin.**

THE COMMAND (1 CORINTHIANS 7:10-16)

MORE QUESTIONS

Paul is addressing additional questions about divorce between two believers. He states that a "wife is **not to leave** her husband and a husband is **not to divorce** his wife."

- In Paul's time there was no difference between leaving (separating) and divorce. Unlike our culture, **the two were synonymous.**

NEVER THE FIRST RESORT

When Paul says, "not I, but the Lord," he is appealing directly to the words Jesus spoke on the topic of divorce, which is recorded for us in Mark 10:11-12 and Matt. 19:9.

- He states plainly that believers must not practice divorce, and in illegitimate divorce, he offers two choices: remain unmarried or be reconciled to your spouse.

"BUT TO THE REST..."

Paul is shifting focus from married believers to a marriage where one is a believer, and the spouse is not. There are legitimate reasons why a believer should not be "unequally yoked" (2 Cor. 6:14) to an unbeliever.

- When two unbelievers are married and one becomes a believer, they are not to divorce the unbelieving spouse.

A BENEFIT TO THE UNBELIEVING SPOUSE

Paul says the unbelieving spouse is "made holy" by the believing spouse.

- This does not mean that the unbelieving spouse is saved just by being married to a believer, but **God has "set that person apart" so that He might draw them in through the believing spouse.**

A BENEFIT TO THE CHILDREN AS WELL

In a similar way to how being in the presence of a believer is good for an unbelieving spouse, Paul says it is also beneficial for the children born into a home with a believing parent.

- Though they are not yet believers, **they are "set apart" in a situation to have a Christ-centered life modeled for them.**

"LET HIM LEAVE"

Paul recognized that despite the positive influence the believer may be able to offer in a mixed marriage, the unbeliever may not want to stay and choose to leave the believer.

- Though the believer should not initiate or desire desertion from their unbelieving spouse, they are not "bound" to their marriage covenant if they chose to leave.

"...FOR ALL YOU KNOW..."

Paul offers some encouragement to those who may be discouraged being in a marriage to an unbeliever.

- He encourages them with the hope that their godly and loving conduct, and not words (1 Peter 3:1-6), may lead their unbelieving spouse into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

THE GOAL (1 CORINTHIANS 7:17-24)

HONOR YOUR CURRENT COVENANT

Paul uses the practice of circumcision to explain the principle of walking in whichever marital situation you were called in.

- A Jewish man, who became a Christ follower would not go and undo his circumcision. Instead, as a circumcised man, he would continue in the situation in which he was called.

THE PRINCIPLE REMAINS THE SAME

This principle taught about marriage is also applied by Paul to slavery. If a person was a slave when he or she became a believer, then that person should not feel compelled to change their status.

- **The situation we are in should not be what is paramount, instead we should focus on keeping God's commands.**

THE EXCEPTION

Paul adds a concession to the situation of slavery just like with marriage. Paul said it was better to be single, unless you could not control yourself.

- Though slavery was common in the Mediterranean world, Paul knew it was not an ideal condition for human beings. He said, "if you can become free, by all means take that opportunity."

EMPATHY

Knowing the external turmoil of those who could not legally be free, Paul offered inner peace that the slaves were freed from the sin which once held them captive.

- Just like the other Corinthian believers, their freedom was bought at the price of Christ's sacrificial death, and whatever their condition they are free because of Christ.

WALK IN THE SITUATION YOU WERE CALLED INTO

- Whatever your situation, whether married, single, divorced, widowed, or remarried, **God can work in your life!**
- **Do not go and do wrong in order to correct past mistakes.** If you are remarried and after wrongly leaving your first spouse you become a Christian, you are to stay in the situation that you were called into.