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1 Corinthians 7:1.

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

Paul had made mention of the fact that he had written a previous letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 5:9). Here he revealed that the Corinthians had previously written to him. There are no copies of these letters left today.

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This chapter covers the subjects of marriage, divorce, and celibacy. Celibacy is discussed in more detail here than in any other chapter in the Bible. These were questions that the Corinthians asked Paul to comment on (this verse) and were no doubt asked because of the extreme sexual immorality that existed in Corinth (see Life for Today Study Bible Notes, Introduction to 1 Corinthians). These Gentile Christians lived in a world where having multiple wives was normal and sexual immorality was a part of pagan worship (see note 1 at Acts 18:1). They needed clarification on the proper sexual conduct of a Christian.

For analytical purposes, this chapter can be divided into the instructions that Paul said were commandments from God (1 Corinthians 7:1-5, 10-11, and 18-24), and those that Paul said were his own opinions (1 Corinthians 7:6-9, 12-17, and 25-40). That means only 35 percent of the verses in this chapter are direct commands from the Lord, while 65 percent of the verses are Paul's opinions.

The scriptures that Paul identified as being his own opinions and not direct commandments from the Lord deal with celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:6-9), conditions under which a believing spouse can leave a marriage and arguments against doing so (1 Corinthians 7:12-17), and once again, the virtues of remaining single (1 Corinthians 7:25-40). The verses that Paul identified as being direct instructions from the Lord deal with an encouragement for everyone to be married and sexual conduct within marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-5), a command against divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-11), and an admonition to sanctify the marital situation people find themselves in at the time of conversion (1 Corinthians 7:18-24).

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Paul began his answers to the Corinthians' questions with a shocking statement. He said it is good for a man not to touch a woman! Strong's Concordance says the Greek word "HAPTOMAI," translated "touch" here, means "properly, to attach oneself to, i.e. to touch (in many implied relations)," so Paul was speaking of not marrying. Still, this is still a shocking statement.

Very few people even consider celibacy, but Paul made no apologies for advocating celibacy. Paul was living a celibate life, and he recommended it for those who could receive it. He brought this issue up three times in this chapter (this verse; 1 Corinthians 7:7-8, and 26-40).

However, it is totally wrong to interpret these statements in a way that makes those who don't marry somehow holier than those who do. That was not Paul's message. Paul's own statement in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 calls it a doctrine of devils to forbid marriage. Therefore, it is a demonic doctrine to demand abstinence from marriage as a requirement for ministers.

Paul encouraged marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:2, 9, 28, and 38. He also gave a command to young widows to remarry (1 Timothy 5:14).

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1 Corinthians 7:2.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

From the context of this verse, it would have to be understood that Paul was saying that every man or woman who is not called to a life of celibacy should have his or her own mate. Unless otherwise called of God, everyone should be married.

Paul made it very clear in this verse that the reason for this is to avoid fornication (see note 2 at 1 Corinthians 5:1). Normal sexual drives are not sin. God created men and women with sexual desires that are meant to be enjoyed in marriage. So, failure to satisfy these desires can lead to lusts producing immorality (except for those whom God has called and given a special ability to be single).

Paul used this same reasoning again in 1 Corinthians 7:5 and instructed the Corinthians not to withhold the physical relationship from their mates unless it was with mutual consent for a short period of time. He said the reason for this was so that Satan wouldn't be able to tempt them through their lack of self-control.

The Apostle Paul acknowledged sexual desires as being normal and encouraged marriage as a deterrent to fornication. This by no means sanctions any form of fornication just because someone is not married.

Whatever situation we find ourselves in, God will give us the grace to conduct our lives in a godly manner. If we are not free to marry without committing adultery, this is no excuse for fornication. However, we were created for marriage, and it frustrates our natural, God-given desires to avoid it without being called to do so.

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1 Corinthians 7:3.

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

The literal meaning of the Greek word "EUNOIA," which was translated "benevolence" in this verse, is "kindness; euphemistically, conjugal duty" (Strong's Concordance). The American Heritage Dictionary defines "conjugal" as "of or relating to marriage or the marital relationship." This verse is speaking of not withholding the sexual relationship from one's mate. This point is expounded on in 1 Corinthians 7:4-5. Special attention needs to be paid to the word "due" here. There are sexual actions that are not normal, and God never expects a marriage partner to perform ungodly sexual acts. No one can honestly try to use this scripture to demand any type of perverted act from his or her mate.

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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.

These are some amazing statements that do not sit well with the thinking of most people today. It would be unthinkable to many people that their mates could have access to them sexually at any time. They would say, "What about my rights?" Paul was saying that when people marry, they yield their rights to their mates, even down to the most intimate details.

If people today would realize that this is the way it is in a godly marriage, they would take the selection of a mate much more seriously, and they would have fewer problems in their marriages.

Of course, it needs to be qualified that the Lord is speaking about normal sexual relationships. This is not saying that either partner has to yield to any type of perverted sexual acts {Herman's Parenthesis: including pain}.

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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.

The Greek word that was translated "defraud" here is "APOSTEREO," and it "signifies to rob, despoil, defraud" (Vine's Expository Dictionary). This is a continuation of the point Paul started making in 1 Corinthians 7:3. Within marriage, one partner does not have the right to withhold normal sexual relationships from his or her mate. Here Paul gave the guidelines for the only exception to this instruction.

To withdraw sexually from marriage, there must be mutual consent for a limited period of time for the express purpose of seeking God through fasting and prayer. No other exceptions are given.

The fact that fasting is involved during this time of separation means that this is a relatively short period of time. Any couple who has stopped sexual relationships for extended periods of time is not functioning in a healthy physical relationship.

The word "incontinency" in the Greek means "want of self-restraint" (Strong's Concordance). Instead of Paul telling the individuals to get their desires in line, he commanded the sexual relationship to resume so that the temptation would be diminished. The answer to sexual immorality is not unlimited relations within marriage, but infrequency of relations within marriage is a temptation that Paul commanded couples to avoid.

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1 Corinthians 7:6.

But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

There were three sections in this chapter where Paul specified that he was speaking without the direct authority of the Lord (see note 2 at 1 Corinthians 7:1). Why did Paul have to speak these things by permission? Surely the Apostle Paul had asked the Lord about these things. Why didn't the Lord just give Paul direct commands as to the exact conduct He demands from us in matters of marriage?

First, all but six verses of Paul's opinions apply to the matter of celibacy. Celibacy is a choice that the Lord only presents to a few individuals. He never demanded this of anyone; therefore, He would never give any commands demanding it.

The remaining six verses have to do with the possibility of divorce in a mixed marriage; i.e., where one of the married partners is a believer and the other isn't. It is possible that the Lord's failure to give Paul any further clarification about mixed marriages in the form of a command indicates that what He had already said was sufficient. The Lord gave Paul a very clear command in 1 Corinthians 7:10 that He does not want His people to divorce, and in 1 Corinthians 7:11, He said if they do, they are not to remarry. If people obeyed these commands, that would even cover mixed marriages.

Yet, in the Old Testament, the Lord gave the people an alternative to His perfect will concerning marriage because of the hardness of their hearts (Mark 10:2-9). It would appear that the Lord did a similar thing here by voicing an opinion through Paul instead of giving a direct command. By not giving a commandment that would allow divorce in a mixed marriage, He was showing that remaining in the marriage is His perfect will. However, by voicing an opinion through Paul that allowed divorce if the unbeliever wanted it, it would provide an out for those who were unable or unwilling to remain in the marriage.

It grieved the Lord to give commands that would provide alternatives to His plan of one man and one woman for life, so He didn't give any. Yet He gave permission to Paul to give these instructions (1 Corinthians 7:40) so that those who found themselves outside of God's best would have some direction about how to redeem the situation.

Therefore, the Lord not giving any definite commands in addition to Jesus' commands on divorce and remarriage (see note 1 at Matthew 19:3, note 6 at Matthew 19:9, note 14 at Mark 10:8, note 15 at Mark 10:9, and note 16 at Mark 10:10) could be viewed as a protest against anything but His best (i.e., one mate for life). Yet His condescension to permit exceptions shows His compassion for those who have missed that mark.

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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.

Paul was single (1 Corinthians 9:5). He was advocating celibacy. This was his second time mentioning it this chapter (see also 1 Corinthians 7:1), and he gave more reasons why he thought this was good in 1 Corinthians 7:25-40. However, in each case, he made it clear that this is not for everyone.

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1 Corinthians 7:8.

I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

Godly unmarried and widowed people do not have sexual relationships. Therefore, Paul was saying it would be his desire that these people remain single and not get married and, therefore, not have physical relationships as those in marriage do.

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1 Corinthians 7:9.

But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

Paul was speaking about burning with passion, as reflected in the translations of the Amplified Bible and the New International Version. The Amplified says, "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]." The NIV says, "But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

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Anyone who is striving to remain single for the Lord's sake and yet is burning in his or her desire toward someone would be better off to marry, according to Paul. If God calls a person to celibacy, the Lord will give him or her the grace to live that life.

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1 Corinthians 7:10.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 is not Paul's opinion; these verses are clear commands from the Lord, voiced by Jesus during His earthly ministry (Matthew 5:32, 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; and Luke 16:18).

The word "depart," as used here and in 1 Corinthians 7:11 and 15, is speaking of divorce. 1 Corinthians 7:11 makes this clear when it says that if she departs, she must remain unmarried. Therefore, this departing is the equivalent of divorce.

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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.

Paul had just stated in 1 Corinthians 7:10 that it was the command of the Lord not to divorce. Here, while he was still speaking a command of the Lord, he proceeded to give instructions to those who don't abide by this command. This is amazing!

The Lord gives His perfect will in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and then provides an alternative in 1 Corinthians 7:11. Divorce is never God's best, but He does allow it. However, there is a difference between what these scriptures teach and what the Lord allowed under the Old Covenant. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the Lord allowed divorce and remarriage. Under these New Testament commands, the Lord allowed divorce but not remarriage. The commands concerning marriage are stricter under grace than they were under Law (Titus 2:11-12).

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The N.T. does not give any instructions about the conditions under which a marriage can be reconciled after divorce. However, the Old Testament did in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. If one of the divorced partners marries someone else, then he or she was not to go back to his or her first mate. It can be assumed that the New Testament silence means that these O.T. instructions still stand.

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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.

Paul had just spoken a command from the Lord that married people should not divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10), and if they do, they are to remain single or be reconciled to their mates (1 Corinthians 7:11). Here Paul added to these instructions with the Lord's permission (1 Corinthians 7:6).

In the case where one of the marriage partners is born again and the other is not, Paul said the believer should remain in the marriage if the unbeliever is agreeable to that. However, if the unbeliever wants a divorce, the believing mate does not have to fight to hold the marriage together; the believer can let the unbeliever depart.

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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.

Just as in the Old Covenant, women didn't have the right to divorce their husbands. A husband could divorce, but all a wife could do was leave. This was true in Paul's day. Women enjoy many rights today that were forbidden to them in centuries past.

There is an emphasis in the previous verse and also in this verse about if one "be pleased to dwell with" the other. So, a believing mate should not leave an unbelieving mate if that unbeliever wants them to stay.

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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.

One of the probable reasons that the Corinthians desired clarification on this matter was because many of them were in mixed marriages. Their mates not only were non-Christians, but also may have been involved in worshiping other gods and in pagan sexual orgies (see note 1 at Acts 18:1). They questioned whether or not God wanted them united with unbelievers through marriage. Wouldn't that defile them? How would such marriages affect their children? This verse answers these questions.

The power of the Lord in the Christian is stronger than the power of the devil in the unbeliever in the marriage union. The believer sanctifies (sets apart) the unbelieving mate from the defilement that he or she would otherwise bring into the marriage. The Lord purifies the marriage situation through the believing mate so that even the children are blessed instead of cursed.

Like any of the other benefits of salvation, this sanctifying power of the Christian mate has to be released through faith. It is not automatic, but it is available to every believer so that any marital situation can be sanctified.

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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.

Many sincere people differ on their interpretation of what this verse means when it says that believers are "not under bondage in such cases." The liberal interpretation would be that Paul was saying they are free to remarry if their unsaved mates divorce them. The conservative view would be that Paul was saying they do not have any obligation to fight to hold the marriage together. Let the unbelievers divorce, but remarriage is still not an option, as stated in 1 Corinthians 7:11.

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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?

Paul expressed the reason he believed staying with the unsaved mate is so important. It was because the believing mate may lead the unbelieving one to faith in Christ. Sad to say, this would not be high on the list of reasons for many Christians today, but it should be.

When things are looked at through the light of God's priorities, the eternal, spiritual matters are infinitely more important than all the temporal things that people hold so dear. As Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Surely Christians laying aside their own desires to remain with their lost mates in hopes of seeing those mates saved would be one of the greatest expressions of Christ-like love.

This line of reasoning is not very popular in today's self-centered generation. "What about my rights?" someone would say, and that is precisely the problem. The root of most divorces is selfishness. If Christians would seriously think about what their actions are doing to their mates, their children, their parents, their friends, their witness, and their society, they would not be so quick to choose divorce.

It is time for us Christians to resign from the "Me Generation." We need to pull our thumbs out of our mouths and grow up. It's time to think of others more than ourselves.

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It is very interesting the way Paul stated the possibilities of the unbelieving mate coming to the Lord. He said that it might happen and it might not. This is radically different than the way some people preach praying for unbelieving mates.

Some people have mistakenly interpreted passages of Scripture like Acts 16:31 to say that we can "claim" our loved ones for Christ and they will be saved regardless. That is not so (see note 4 at Acts 16:31). One of the most sacred trusts that God has given man is the right to choose. God will protect that right regardless of the consequences.

People must come to faith in Christ through their own choice. We can certainly encourage them and do battle with the spiritual powers that blind them (2 Corinthians 4:4), but the choice is

theirs. Not understanding this has caused many godly Christians to feel like failures because their lost mates have not been born again. Certainly, this was not the attitude Paul had here.

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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.

There are so many variations of marital situations that it is impossible to give general instructions that will cover all of the possibilities. Therefore, the individuals must let God lead them personally in their own situations within the boundaries of Paul's previous statements. This is what Paul was advocating here.

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Paul was assuring the Corinthians that these instructions, however limiting they might seem, were not unusual. He had given similar instructions to all the churches he oversaw. He was treating this matter the same way that he had dealt with it in other churches.

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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.

What does it mean to become uncircumcised? How could that be? It is a fact that in Paul's day, the physical appearance of circumcision could be reversed (Adam Clarke's Commentary), similar to the way modern surgery could change the appearance today. But that is extreme and not what Paul was talking about here.

The word "circumcision" referred to more than the physical act. It was a condition of the heart (see note 4 at Romans 2:29), and in a broader sense, it referred to the fact that an individual was a Jew (see note 1 at Acts 11:2). Therefore, Paul was simply stating that those who were Jews before they were born again should not renounce their Jewish heritage. Likewise, Gentiles who come to Christ do not have to become Jewish.

Failure to understand this truth has caused some Christians to feel they have to embrace the Jewish practices prescribed in the Old Testament. Others, who were Jews, are sometimes led to believe they have to sever all links with their Jewish heritage. Neither is true. The only thing that matters to God is our new identity in Christ (Galatians 6:15).

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1 Corinthians 7:19.

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Circumcision Was a commandment. It was first given to Abraham, and any Jew who didn't practice it was to be put to death (Genesis 17:14). This was upheld in the Old Testament Law (Leviticus 12:3). Moses was nearly slain by the Lord for not circumcising his son (Exodus 4:24-26).



But notice that here, Paul separated it from the commandments. That's because the New Testament believer is delivered from the O.T. Law (Romans 7:6 and 10:4) and is now under the law that Christ gave, which was to love God first and others second (Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:27, and John 13:34-35). This law of Christ was summarized in loving our neighbor as ourselves (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14, and 6:2).

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This was a very radical statement in Paul's day (see note 4 at Romans 3:19). All of the unbelieving Jews, as well as many of the Jewish Christians, believed that circumcision was essential for salvation. Paul said that it was "nothing" ("one of no consequence or interest" [American Heritage Dictionary]).

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1 Corinthians 7:20.

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 mention circumcision and slavery, but in fact, they are a continuation of his teaching on the obligation of a Christian mate in an un-Christian marriage (see note 16 at 1 Corinthians 7:12). This verse is the real point he was making. Christians should redeem the situations they find themselves in at the time of salvation and not worry about undoing the past.

Just as eggs cannot be unscrambled, so the mistakes made in marriage before salvation cannot be rectified by divorcing the unbeliever. Paul was saying that whatever marital situation believers find themselves in at the time of salvation is where they should stay (this would not apply to extramarital relations or perversions such as homosexuality).

Some think that if their marriages were adulterous affairs from the beginning, then surely God would have them to dissolve those marriages. Paul was speaking against that. It is very clear that King David's relationship with Bathsheba was adulterous. Yet, when he repented, God forgave him and blessed his marriage with Bathsheba to such a degree that the Lord personally named their child Jedidiah (2 Samuel 12:24-25), meaning "beloved of Jah" (Strong's Concordance).

\*\*Likewise, marriages that were totally wrong before salvation can be sanctified (1 Corinthians 7:14) and redeemed so that they become blessed relationships.\*\*

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1 Corinthians 7:21.

Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

These are some amazing statements about slavery. Paul was revealing an attitude toward slavery that would be totally unacceptable to most Christians today. He instructed Christians who were slaves not to let their situations bother them. He told them to be content with their slavery. In other passages, Paul reaffirmed this teaching (Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22, 1 Timothy 6:1-2, Titus 2:9; and 1 Peter 2:18), and told Christian slave owners how to treat their slaves (Ephesians 6:9 and Colossians 4:1). He did not take a corrective stand against slavery even though he had enough influence to limit this practice among Christians.

The Scriptures do reveal that it was never God's intention for people to own others as property. This can be seen by the fact that the Lord expressly forbade slavery for His people (Leviticus 25:42-46) and in Deuteronomy 28, He listed slavery as a curse, not a blessing. Yet none of the New Testament leaders, including Jesus, tried to change the practice.

In 1 Corinthians 7:22, Paul gave the reason for his social passivity. Freedom in Christ is so liberating that it doesn't really matter what people's physical conditions are. Those who have freedom in Christ are free indeed (John 8:32) regardless of their physical conditions. Those who don't share Paul's view are simply more occupied with the temporal world than they are the spiritual world (2 Corinthians 4:18).

If the Lord would have established a physical kingdom to ensure civil rights, such as freedom from slavery, then that kingdom would have been subject to change (2 Corinthians 4:18). By establishing a spiritual kingdom in people's hearts (Luke 17:21), the Lord guaranteed real freedom to His followers, freedom that is not subject to the whims of man (Hebrews 12:28).

\*\*Millions of believers living under terrible oppression have discovered a peace in Jesus that passes understanding and physical circumstances.\*\* The focus of the believers should be on the invisible, spiritual kingdom instead of the temporal, physical kingdoms of man.

This is not to say that working for freedom from oppression is wrong. True Christianity of the heart will always result in godly actions. Throughout history, many godly people have given their lives for social change. Yet it can be said that among New Testament characters, the focus of Christian leaders was not on the physical kingdoms of this world but on the spiritual kingdom in people's hearts. As people's hearts are changed by the Gospel, they, in turn, will change governments and social ills. Sharing the life-changing truths of the Gospel is the greatest force for social change.

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This phrase –"if thou mayest be made free, use it rather"– is a little hard to understand, but most scholars agree that Paul was saying that if slaves have the opportunity to become free, they should take it."Although if you can gain your freedom, do so" (New International Version).

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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.

Paul was saying that those Christians who are not slaves to any person are slaves to Christ (see note 1 at Romans 1:1). The whole concept of absolute freedom that many espouse today was foreign to Paul and scriptural truth. True Christians have come under the Lordship of Jesus. They do not own themselves (1 Corinthians 7:23).

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1 Corinthians 7:23.

Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

This appears to be contrary to what Paul had just said in 1 Corinthians 7:21, but of course, it isn't. Although Paul told slaves to submit here, other instructions to slaves made it clear that they

were actually serving Christ, not man (Ephesians 6:5-7 and Colossians 3:22-24). When this attitude is adopted, then the bondage is removed from slavery. Christian slaves could not be forced to do what they freely offered to do.

Slavery is not a major issue in the world today as it was in the past. Yet these same principles apply in many areas of our modern-day lives. We could easily substitute the words "employer" and "employee" for "master" and "servant." These truths will work in any relationship where one person is in authority over another.

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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.

The word "virgins" or "virgin" is used five times in this chapter (1 Corinthians 7:25, 28, 34, and 36-37). In each instance, this was translated from the Greek word "PARTHENOS," and it means "a maiden; by implication, an unmarried daughter" (Strong's Concordance). However, the dictionary defines "virgin" as "a person who has not experienced sexual intercourse" (American Heritage Dictionary).

The context of this verse suggests that the word "virgin" is referring to both males and females who have never had physical relations. The next verse (1 Corinthians 7:26) says that it is good for a man to be this way (a virgin). 1 Corinthians 7:27-28, 32-33, and 36-38 all speak to males about this subject of virginity. Therefore, 1 Corinthians 7:25-40 is talking about the virtues of remaining single, whether male or female.

Widows or widowers would also fit into this category even though they had previously had sexual intercourse. Paul would have them consider the virtues of remaining single.

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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.

Paul gave a very clear reason why he thought celibacy was good. It was because of the present distress. Some think that this is limited to the situation of Paul's day when there was much hostility toward Christianity. However, it is just as likely that Paul was referring to the entire condition of mankind since the Fall until the Second Coming of Christ.

Due to the fact that marriage takes a lot of effort and time, some people could profit by remaining single. This is easy to see in the case of some missionary endeavors where the minister might be gone long periods of time and face extreme hardships. In Paul's case, a wife and children would have drastically changed the way he ministered. It's one thing to put your own life at risk for the sake of the Gospel, but it is an entirely different thing when your mate or child is going to be killed for your stand of faith. By the grace of God, an individual can remain faithful in a situation like that, but Paul said it was good to avoid this temptation if God gives you the grace to remain single.

He also said in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 that marriage causes people to be occupied with the things of this world more than single people have to be. Therefore, he advocated celibacy so that people can serve the Lord without distraction (1 Corinthians 7:35).

It needs to be noted that God's original and perfect plan for every person was marriage (Genesis 2:18), but because of the corruption that is in the world (the present distress), some individuals are graced by God with the ability to remain single and will be more effective in that state.

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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.

This is a very clear command for a married person not to seek divorce.

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This is a very clear command for single people not to seek mates. This comes as a radical statement to most people today. Many Christian singles feel compelled to get married. They pray for mates constantly. That is contrary to what Paul spoke here.

If it is God's will for you to be married, the correct way to find that mate is not to go seeking him or her. Instead, seek the Lord and He will bring the perfect mate to you.

Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." Psalms 34:10 says, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing." Therefore, if a mate is a good thing for you, the Lord will bring that person to you as you seek Him.

God brought Eve to Adam, Rebekah to Isaac, and Ruth to Boaz, and He will bring your mate to you if you will seek Him and not a mate. This takes all the frustration out of finding a mate, and it also will prevent choosing the wrong mate. The whole dating process as we know it in the western world today is not God's way.

If you shop around and become emotionally and physically involved with a potential mate and then approach the Lord to ask, "Is this the one?" you are going to have a hard time hearing God's voice. Your emotions and hormones are going to be speaking so loudly that it will be hard to hear the still, small voice of God.

\*\*The scriptural way of receiving your mate from God is the way that Paul put forth here. Are you single? Don't seek a mate! Seek God, and if the Lord wills for you to be married, He will arrange it. {Herman's Note "The One" }

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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.

A godly marriage is one of the greatest blessings of God in this physical life. However, even good marriages have troubles. It is not easy for two people to deny themselves and become one

new person. If God called you to the marriage, the reward is well worth the effort, but if God is giving you the grace to remain single, you can save yourself some trouble by remaining single.

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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;

Paul wasn't speaking about the time before the Lord's return as being short; he was speaking about our human lifespan as being a short time to accomplish the work of the Lord. With this in mind, all of us should live as though this is the last generation because, for us, it is the last generation. We have to do what we are going to do now.

In 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Paul was saying that the time is short, the job is big, and therefore, even those who are married need to increase their devotion to the things of God so that we can accomplish the task the Lord gave us of evangelizing this world.

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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;

Because our lives are so short (see note 7 at 1 Corinthians 7:29), we need to quit weeping over past problems and get on with the job of reaching the lost.

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Because our lives are so short (see note 7 at 1 Corinthians 7:29), we need to not become so occupied with our own pleasures that we forget the task of winning the lost.

Note 10 at 1 Corinthians 7:30: Because our lives are so short (see note 7 at 1 Corinthians 7:29), we need to not get so involved in the affairs of business that we fail to accomplish our part of reaching the lost.

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1 Corinthians 7:31.

And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

All of us have to be occupied with the affairs of this world to a degree. We have to make a living, eat, take care of our bodies, etc., but we should always remember that all these physical things are only temporary. It is only the spiritual things that we accomplish that are eternal.

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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:

No one can contest the fact that in order to have a good marriage, a person has to spend time and effort ministering to his or her mate. If children are involved, the commitment is even greater. One of the advantages of being single is being able to focus more attention on the Lord.

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1 Corinthians 7:33.

But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

Paul was not saying that married people are more carnal than single ones. He was simply saying that marriage increases people's physical responsibilities and makes them spend more time being occupied with the affairs of this life. If God gives people the grace to be single, they should use it to seek the Lord without distraction.

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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.

Paul was not saying that a married woman is not as holy as a virgin. Rather, he was stressing that a married woman cannot focus all her attention on the Lord the way a single woman can. Her obligations to her family are time-consuming. The next verse (1 Corinthians 7:35) makes it clear that he said these things so that they could focus all their attention on the Lord without distraction.

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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.

This is the "bottom line" of all Paul's arguments for celibacy. There is nothing unholy or impure about marriage (Hebrews 13:4). It was created by God for sinless man. The benefit of remaining single is so that all an individual's attention can be focused on the Lord without distraction.

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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.

There is quite a variety of interpretations of this verse among scholars. However, most of the interpretations boil down to the same point. This passage is speaking of a man having trouble keeping his virginity (see note 1 at 1 Corinthians 7:25). Therefore, Paul's instructions that he had given earlier in the chapter would apply (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). Let them marry.

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This phrase, "pass the flower of her age," means if she is old enough to be married. The entire phrase comes from one Greek word, "HUPERAKMOS," meaning "beyond the 'acme', i.e. figuratively (of a daughter) past the bloom (prime) of youth" (Strong's Concordance).

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1 Corinthians 7:38.

So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

Paul once again reaffirmed that marriage is good (Proverbs 18:22), but for those who have no need to get married, being single is even better.

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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.

Paul expounded on this in more detail in his third letter to the Corinthians, which we call 2 Corinthians (see Life for Today Study Bible Notes, Introduction to 1 Corinthians). In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Paul gave explicit commands about not being unequally yoked to an unbeliever and promises of blessing from God for following these instructions.

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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.

This is one of the most radical statements on marriage in the Bible: Marriage was not designed to make us happy. Paul said we would be happier if we remain single.

Many people look to marriage to provide things for them that God never intended marriage to do. Therefore, it is just a matter of time until these false expectations produce disappointment and frustration, which often get directed at the mate. They think, "My lack of joy and peace is all your fault. If you were the spouse you were supposed to be, I'd be happy."

However, marriage wasn't intended to make us happy or fulfilled or to take away loneliness. All these needs should be met through our relationship with the Lord.

Only when people find their happiness and peace and fulfillment in the Lord will they be able to really enjoy their marriages. A lack of understanding this is the cause of many marital problems. People's mates can never be to them what God is meant to be.

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This is quite an understatement. Paul certainly had the Spirit of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit had Paul also. Even though he had said that many of his statements in this chapter were not direct commands from God (see note 9 at 1 Corinthians 7:6), Paul's opinion was not to be dismissed as inferior.