

**I CORINTHIANS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Corinthians chapter 7 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Keep in mind that the first six chapters of I Corinthians dealt with problems in the church there in Corinth and Paul addressed them and was trying to help correct their error. I am sure for Paul, like today, people don't want to be corrected, they think they are fine, or they are right and yet, the Bible speaks contrary to their actions. But they don't want to listen.

But now they were accountable to God because they heard the truth. Now it was up to them what they were going to do with that truth!

Now, starting in I Corinthians chapter 7 and going on through I Corinthians chapter 15, Paul is going to answer some questions that they had there in Corinth. Areas of concern they had, and Paul is going to share with them what God has to say about these questions.

We will see in I Corinthians chapter 7 that Paul will deal with marriage, remarriage, divorce and singleness. A hot topic today and if you think they were confused back in Paul's day, we are just as confused, and we need the light of God's Word to keep us walking down the right path!

In I Corinthians chapters 8 through 11 Paul will be dealing with Christian liberty and conduct. Again, a very important issue that we need to understand from a Biblical mindset and not a worldly one!

As we move on into I Corinthians chapters 12 through 14 Paul will deal with Spiritual gifts and what they are all about. Again, talk about confusion back then as well as today. I think many get confused because they listen to the arguments of men instead of what the Lord is saying. And in this section on Spiritual gifts, Paul says that he does not want us to be ignorant about them, and neither does the Lord!

And then in I Corinthians chapter 15 Paul is going to deal with the resurrection of the dead and what that is all about.

As Paul concludes this letter, in I Corinthians chapter 16, he will deal with his closing comments and he will exhort them to continue on in the faith!

Before we get to our text on marriage, remarriage and singleness, let me share this with you, it will give you an interesting perspective on what we will be dealing with this evening. We are told,

The comedian Chris Rock often says, “Do you want to be single and lonely, or married and bored?” Unfortunately, we tend to think those are the only two options. Dana Shapiro, commenting on the film *Monogamy*, says that a monogamous marriage relationship is intractably difficult. The reason he said that was because he believes that a really intimate, committed relationship in which there is deep devotion is essentially going to smother or stifle one’s autonomy and independence. So whether it’s from a public thinker like Shapiro or a comedian such as Chris Rock, modern culture has all sorts of negative impressions about what marriage is. And sadly, some Christians’ principles have been borrowed from what is found in the culture rather than what is found in the Bible.

The Corinthian culture was essentially hedonistic [pleasure, self-seeking]. Paul has already addressed the topic of sexual immorality in the context of the local church. Some members of the community were visiting prostitutes because prostitution was socially acceptable and was more of a norm than an exception. The Corinthian culture believed that marriage was not the place where one could experience sexual fulfillment. Some Christians in Corinth reacted to this by being overly ascetic [careful]. It was right to react to the hedonism of the culture, especially in light of the fact that it was creeping into the church, but they overreacted. According to verse 1, some were saying, “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”

There are similar issues in our day. The broader culture is extremely libertarian and hedonistic in its approach to human sexuality. Religious people have often been criticized of being extremely prudish and ascetic in their approach to human sexuality. Against these two extremes Paul gives us an incredibly balanced and humanizing view of sexuality. Hedonism essentially says, “Have sex with anyone you want. The body is a morally neutral zone. As long as the adults are consenting, there are no moral implications.” This view ultimately dehumanizes the participants by removing the soul from the picture of sexuality, thereby animalizing human beings. Asceticism, on the other hand, says, “Don’t have sex with anyone! The body is a morally evil zone.” Even within the context of marriage, sexuality is viewed as a weakness and potentially a sin. This view ultimately dehumanizes individuals by rejecting an essential part of their humanity – the body. Asceticism over spiritualizes human beings.

Biblical sexuality, on the other hand, promotes an individual having sex with an individual of the opposite gender within the context of marriage. It declares that the body is good. God has given us bodies to steward for his glory and our enjoyment. Sexuality is healthy when it is expressed in the context for which God designed it. It ultimately humanizes individuals by affirming both the body and the soul. Biblical sexuality is the only view of sexuality that can properly account for the body and the soul.

- Stephen T. Um, 1 Corinthians – The Word of the Cross, pp. 121-122

So this is a very interesting and I believe important section of Scripture because there is such an attack today on marriage that we need to get back to what God has to say and stop listening to what the world is saying about marriage!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 7, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

## **I CORINTHIANS 7**

### **VERSES 1-2**

We are now going to see Paul answer some questions the Corinthian believers had and wrote to Paul about.

This was probably a letter delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, spoken of in I Corinthians 16:17.

Now, the first 9 verses of this chapter Paul deals with the question of whether singleness and celibacy is more spiritual and therefore to be preferred over marriage.

Keep in mind that the city of Corinth had no real morality. They indulged themselves in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, divorce, prostitution and-so-on.

In fact, it was common for people to have been married some 20 times or more!

Thus, some believers came to the conclusion that in marriage celibacy was the best option, even separating from their spouse. They thought it made you more holy!

In regard to this, Hodge wrote, “The idea that marriage was a less holy state than celibacy, naturally led to the conclusion that married persons ought to separate, and it soon came to be regarded as an evidence of eminent spirituality when such a separation was final.”

And thank God Paul said that their ideas were false, they were not true.

In Hebrews 13:4 Paul tells us, “**Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**”

Paul is going to deal more with this issue of sexual relations between a husband and a wife as we move on and folks, this truly is an important section for us because man has truly perverted what God has said regarding sexual relations and the church has also had its share in wrong information being given out regarding this issue. So hopefully we will clarify it for you this evening.

Listen again to what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 7:2, this is important in a time when all kinds of sexual perversions are going on. Look at how simple this is and what God has said, “**Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.**”

It amazes me when I hear people, sometimes Christians that support the homosexual lifestyle, believing that God accepts it. He doesn't!

Notice that the marriage relationship is between one man and one woman! That rules out polygamy, homosexuality, pedophilia and any other perversion man wants!

As much as sexual perversion was a problem in Corinth back then, it is a problem in America today. And the only solution to that problem is Jesus! You see, He has told us how we are to live out our lives, not to ruin our fun, but to bless our lives and keep us safe.

And when you look at the divorce rate, people living together outside of marriage, single parents, homosexuality and-so-on, we need to get back on track and return to the One who said when He brought man and woman together in the Garden of Eden, “**. . . it was very good.**” Genesis 1:31.

Never forget that what God has made Satan will try to pervert and he will succeed if we let him. Listen to what God has said in His Word and you will not go wrong.

And please understand that Paul is not saying we should just get married so we can have sex! What he is saying is that God has built in us this sex drive and marriage is a good thing, not a bad thing. But, in their questions, “**It is good for a man not to touch a woman.**” That is the thought, no sex, no relationships!

Now, keep in mind that this is not an in-depth teaching by Paul on marriage, he is answering the question about staying married or not! There are other portions of Scripture that deal with marriage, like Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19.

### VERSES 3-6

Right away, as we read this, we think of sexual relations between a husband and a wife. But listen again to what Paul is saying in verse 3, “**Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.**”

You see, there needs to be affection, love, making that person feel special because your responsibility is to your spouse.

I think some of the problems today is that sex is the main focus when it should be the fruit, you might say, of a deep relationship with your spouse.

And Paul is saying that both men and women need to feel this affection, granted men are different than women, but as you spend time with each other, you know what your spouse needs, and you can give them that affection that is so important for a healthy marriage!

“But what about me?”

I will tell you this, after almost 40 years of marriage, my desire is to continue to make my wife feel like she is the most important person in the world and I have never felt disappointed or said, “What about me?” unless I was so self-consumed with myself!

And please understand that this intimacy is not an option, God has given it to us and we are not to hold it from the other person unless there is a mutual consent, that both agree on the time period of the celibacy, and it is used as a time to draw close to God, be in prayer.

Celibacy is not a command but a concession if both parties agree on it and only for a period of time!

Isn't it interesting that God says sex is good within marriage and Satan comes and says, “It is wrong, it is not good! What is better is sex outside of marriage, taste and see what you are missing!”

On the other hand, God says sex outside of marriage is wrong, it will hurt you in the end, and Satan comes and says, “No, it is good!”

Thus, in marriage you need to give yourself to your spouse and you won't let Satan get in and try to drive a wedge between you, tempting you to move away from your spouse.

Of this Christenson wrote, “In plain language this means that if one partner desires the sexual relationship, the other should respond to that desire. The husband and wife who adopt this down-to-earth approach to sex will find it a wonderfully satisfying aspect of their marriage – for the simple reason that the relationship is rooted in reality, and not in some artificial or impossible ideal.”

Also, let me say this. Don’t use sex as a weapon against your spouse because Satan will come in and drive a wedge between you and your spouse. This is one of those huge problems in marriage because once one of the partners starts to do this and sees what they can get by holding back on sex until some certain criteria are met, whatever that may be, and it will only get worse. Be careful, be wise and listen to what the Lord has said in His Word for He has what is best for your marriage!

#### VERSE 7

Keep in mind that prior to Paul’s conversion to Christianity he was a member of the Sanhedrin and thus, he was married.

What happened to his wife we don’t know, she may have died, or she may have left Paul when he became a Christian. Whatever the case, at this time Paul was single and he says that God has given to him this gift of singleness, of celibacy.

For others, their gift is to be married and enjoy a healthy sexual relationship within the bounds of marriage.

As we read on Paul is going to address four groups of believers,

Those Christians who had been married – I Corinthians 7:8-9.

Those Christians who are married to other Christians – I Corinthians 7:10-11.



Those Christians who are married to unbelievers who want to remain married –  
I Corinthians 7:12-14.

Those who are married to unbelievers who want to leave the marriage – I Corinthians  
7:15-16.

### VERSES 8-9

Keep in mind that Paul is speaking about those Christians who have been married in  
these verses.

First Paul speaks of the “**unmarried.**” I know, you are thinking how can this be speaking  
of someone who is married when it specifically says that they were unmarried?

Please understand that the Greek word here is AGAMOS, and it speaks of “wedding, or  
marriage.” But it has the negative prefix added to it, “a” which speaks of unmarried!

I believe that Paul is speaking of those who were married and are now divorced, not  
virgins, because Paul speaks of virgins in verse 25 of I Corinthians chapter 7. And, of course,  
these are people who were never married.

The people Paul is speaking of here are not virgins, they were married, and, like I have  
said, they are now divorced.

He also speaks of “**widows**” or those who were married, and their spouse died.

Can these two groups of people get married again, that is the idea here, that is the  
question that Paul is answering!

And Paul tells them, “**It is good for them if they remain even as I am.**” In other words,  
he is saying that it is better for them to remain single than to get married again.

Why is that? Paul will speak of that latter on in this chapter, but his point is that the days are short, the Lord is coming back, and if you get married you will have to take care of your spouse and it will interfere with your service to the Lord!

Now, Paul does not end there and there is a big ***BUT*** that begins verse 9. Listen carefully to what Paul has to say here. He wrote, **“but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”** I Corinthians 7:10.

Now let me say this. Paul is not saying just marry the first person that comes along so you can have sex. That happens, and the results are not very good!

Remember what Corinth was like, all the immorality that was going on, and with all that they saw, all the temptation that was out there, it was hard to resist.

God has given us a sex drive, and that is not evil, that is not wrong. What happens is that Satan will use what God has given to us and pervert it and we can clearly see that in our society today!

Paul is saying that don't be celibate if you have those feelings. Seek a woman and get married.

And the reality is, trying to serve the Lord when you are burning with those passions, it will be very difficult. Thus, get married and continue to serve the Lord and your spouse.

I think many Christians think that sex is wrong, it is evil, it is only for having children. No, God has given us this intimate relationship between a husband and wife to enjoy. Yes, to have children, but it is something that is special between a husband and a wife!

Now Paul is going to address those Christians who have been married to other Christians and the subject of divorce.

VERSES 10-11

I was not going to spend a lot of time on this, but the Lord impressed upon me that I need to spend some time here talking about divorce, because it is a big issue in the church today. In fact, it is common for Christians to divorce today, and that should not be.

Yes, the statistics are lower than the unsaved, but if you look at the numbers, some 38% of Christians who regularly go to church and practice their faith, get divorced, that number is still way too high. Listen to this,

Many people who seriously practice a traditional religious faith – be it Christian or other – have a divorce rate markedly lower than the general population.

***The factor making the most difference is religious commitment and practice.***

The intuitive is true! Couples who regularly practice any combination of serious religious behaviors and attitudes – attend church nearly every week, read their Bibles and spiritual materials regularly; pray privately and together; generally take their faith seriously, living not as *perfect* disciples, but *serious* disciples – enjoy significantly lower divorce rates than mere church members, the general public and unbelievers.

Professor Bradley Wright, a sociologist at the University of Connecticut, explains from his analysis of people who identify as Christians but rarely attend church, that 60 percent of these have been divorced. Of those who attend church regularly, 38 percent have been divorced.

Other data from additional sociologists of family and religion suggest a significant marital stability divide between those who take their faith seriously and those who do not.

W. Bradford Wilcox, a leading sociologist at the University of Virginia and director of the National Marriage Project, finds from his own analysis that “active conservative Protestants” who regularly attend church have are 35 percent *less likely to divorce* compared to those who have no affiliation. Nominally attending conservative Protestants are 20 percent more likely to divorce, compared to secular Americans. . . .

Professor Scott Stanley from the University of Denver . . . working. . . on the Oklahoma Marriage Study, explains that couples with a vibrant religious faith had more and higher levels of the qualities couples need to avoid divorce.

“Whether young or old, male or female, low-income or not, those who said that they were more religious reported higher average levels of commitment to their partners, higher levels of marital satisfaction, less thinking and talking about divorce and lower levels of negative interaction. These patterns held true when controlling for such important variables as income, education, and age at first marriage.”

These positive factors translated into actual lowered risk of divorce among active believers.

“Those who say they are more religious are less likely, not more, to have already experienced divorce. Likewise, those who report more frequent attendance at religious services were significantly less likely to have been divorced.”

- <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/focus-findings/marriage/divorce-rate-in-the-church-as-high-as-the-world>

It seems to me that many times people and churches have just given in to this idea of divorce. But I think we need to look at what God has to say in His Word, not our own feelings or what others are telling us, or what you think God is telling you that is contrary to His Word!

Let me start out here. When Paul says, **“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord.”** what does he mean?

Paul simply means that what he was teaching here had already been taught by the Lord Jesus when He was on earth.

And Paul then says that a wife is not to depart from her husband and a husband is not to divorce his wife. Pretty straight forward and yet, the excuses for divorce are amazing. People are very imaginative about justifying why they are getting a divorce.

Turn to Matthew chapter 19 and let’s begin reading in verse 4. In this section the Pharisees came to test Jesus, to catch Him so they can discredit Him. And the question that they ask Jesus is simple, **“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”**

And listen to what Jesus said to them, **“And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”?’ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’ They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’”** Matthew 19:4-9.

First of all, we need to keep in mind that two schools of thought were around in Jesus day about divorce. And these two schools of thought came out of the Old Testament, from Deuteronomy 24:1, which says, **“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some *uncleanness* in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house.”**

So the big question is, “What does that word, *“uncleanness”* mean?” And the two schools of thought were as follows.

Those who followed the teachings of Rabbi Shammai were very conservative and he taught the only way a divorce could be granted and should be granted was for sexual immorality or adultery – that is what the word *“uncleanness”* means.

On the other end of the spectrum was Rabbi Hillel and he was very liberal in his teachings. If a wife messed up his breakfast, he could divorce her, or even if a prettier woman came along, he could divorce her. That is a very liberal interpretation of what *“uncleanness”* means.

I am not sure if I need to ask you this question, I am sure you know the answer. But, guess what view was more popular?

Of course it was the liberal view, but Jesus narrows it down to one exception and that was for adultery and this is not a command for a divorce, but a condition.

Notice what is going on here. The Pharisees wanted to talk about divorce and the rabbinical opinions, but not Jesus. He takes them back to the Scriptures to talk about marriage!

And let me say this because today there is so much confusion regarding transgender, homosexuality, lesbianism and people want to talk about it and all I can say, **“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female.”** I don’t care what anyone’s opinion is and neither does Jesus! What do the Scriptures say!

So Jesus takes them back to the very beginning, to the Garden of Eden. And Jesus is taking them back before the Law, not to traditions or any religious leader, but to God Himself.

So Jesus took the narrow view, and made it even stricter by saying that God has joined man and woman together, and thus, they should not be separated, CHORIZETO in the Greek, which speaks of divorce!

And I am sure that at this point, they thought they got Jesus. That is why they asked him, **“... ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’”**

But Jesus does not give in to them but gives them the reason that Moses allowed for divorce.

Moses received the Law from God and in it there is a provision for divorce. Now here comes Jesus, claiming to be God, and yet He is contradicting what Moses said. And if that is true, then Jesus is also in conflict with God and thus, He must not be of God. “Gotcha,” they thought!

But they missed the point and Jesus tells these religious leaders that very thing. You see, Jesus did not say that God commanded them to get a divorce but that He permitted it not because God was in favor of it, but it was, **“because of the hardness of your hearts.”**

It was as if Jesus said, “Here is the ideal for marriage; and here is the allowance of God when human sinfulness and hardness of heart has made the ideal unobtainable.”

You see, God's divine plan was that a man and a woman would be joined together in marriage for a lifetime. But, because of man's hard heart, God allowed for divorce. This is not a command or a mandate for divorce, but it is a provision that God allowed in the event of adultery or sexual sin. And even then, there should be a time for reconciliation; it shouldn't be used as a loop hole to get out of marriage.

Paul, in Ephesians 5:31 wrote in regard to marriage, **“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”**

Paul uses the Greek word PROSKOLLAO (pros-kol-lah'-o) for **“joined”** and it speaks of gluing together, adhering to one another.

That is why the man is to ***LEAVE*** his mother and father, the same with the woman, because they are now joined together with each other, not with their parents. The cord needs to be cut or there will be problems.

Also, if in marriage the couple is joined together or glued together, what happens when they are pulled apart, like in divorce? You know what happens when you try to pull two pieces of wood apart that have been glued together, there are splinters, jagged edges, it is a mess and the same is true in divorce. That is why God hates it, it destroys lives and God never intended it to be that way!

Remember what the Lord said in Malachi 2:16, **“For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence,’ Says the Lord of hosts. ‘Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.’”**



When you take those vows before God in marriage, you need to understand that it is until death do you part. Now I am not advocating killing your spouse to get out of the marriage, even though some may want to. Marriage is not easy and that is why the Lord needs to be in the center of it!

And I will tell you this, if you are close to the Lord then you will be close to each other. As you move away from the Lord, you will move away from each other.

Think of a triangle, with the Lord at the top point. Place yourself at one of the bottom points and your spouse at the other bottom point.

You are far from each other. But start drawing closer to God, moving towards God and what happens as you do is that you are moving closer to each other. That is the key.

I will say this, and you may not agree with it, but it is very true. If you have moved away from your spouse, it is because you have moved away from God!

Now a wife is not to be a punching bag for her husband and that may be the reason that Paul says, **“But if she does depart.”**

Get away, give him time to get right with the Lord. It is not a time for her to look for another husband, for Paul says, **“let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband.”**

We pray for reconciliation, that is what God desires, but, because the hardness of heart, that does not always happen.

And please understand that if someone says, “God just doesn’t want me to be married to this person anymore” or “God brought someone better to me,” they are wrong and not speaking from God at all. God never recognizes a divorce for such reasons.

And, even in sexual immorality Jesus did not command divorce, but He permitted it. It is not God’s plan.

And before I move on, let me make sure you understand this. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin. I realize that some have made it the unpardonable sin, but it is not!

But why do you want to go against what God has said in His Word. Why do you want to grieve the Holy Spirit? I am not saying it will be easy, but it is what is best for your life as a Christian!

Now we are going to see Paul speak about those Christians who are married to unbelievers and want to remain married to them.

#### VERSES 12-14

Paul opens this section up by speaking of a different group of people. The reason I say that is because of these words, “**But to the rest.**”

Paul just spoke about couples where both partners were Christians. But that focus is now changed to where one of the couples in this marriage are Christian and the other is not, they are not saved and what should you do?

Specifically, he is speaking of the wife, but both apply because a believing husband can be married to an unbelieving wife!

Now as some read this, they feel that this is Paul’s opinion and not from the Lord. Why do I say that? Because of these words by Paul, “**But to the rest I, not the Lord, say . . .**”

Please understand what Paul is saying here. He is telling them, and us, that when the Lord Jesus was on this earth He did not specifically deal with this issue. But Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write these words down. In fact, in I Corinthians 7:40 Paul makes that very point as he tells us, “**. . . and I think I also have the Spirit of God.**”

And then Paul deals with a Christian who is married to an unbeliever and how divorce fits in. And please understand that for the most part, these were people who came to Christ after they were married, and their spouse did not. Paul is not advocating or encouraging the dating or marriage to unsaved people. Not at all. How can I be so sure?

Listen carefully to what Paul said in II Corinthians 6:14-18. He wrote, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.”**

And thus, Paul’s point is that if you are married to an unbeliever you should remain together because the blessings that God is pouring out on you will be felt by the unbelieving spouse and they might turn to the Lord, they might get saved!

But, if the unbelieving spouse wants a divorce, there is nothing you can do about it, let them go. The thing is, don’t make their life so miserable that they want to divorce you. Bless them, make them feel that they are loved and see what God can do!

Why should a person do that? Why should they remain with an unbelieving spouse?

Paul answers that question by saying, **“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband . . .”**

Is Paul saying that the unbelieving spouse is saved because they are married to a believer?

Absolutely not! You will not find that in the Scriptures! The word “**sanctified**” is the Greek word “hagios” and it means to be set apart.

What Paul is saying is that an unbeliever who is married to a Christian has special blessings because of their believing spouse. As God blesses the believer, and the unbelieving spouse benefits from it. That is the point that Paul is making.

Not only that, but they may come to know the Lord through your love for them! What if they don’t deserve it? None of us deserve the love of God and yet He freely gives it to us. We should do no less. Don’t you want to see them saved?

Peter put it like this in I Peter 3:1-5, “**Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.**”

And Paul is going to deal with this more as we get into I Corinthians 7:15-16, the salvation of an unbelieving spouse!

I hope that is clear! One more point here. Paul also said, “**. . . otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.**” Is he saying that if you stay married to a believing spouse that the children are saved? Not at all, that is not Scriptural.

I think this is the point that Paul is making here. Many times Christian women who are married to unbelievers want to leave them because they're afraid that the children will be **“defiled”** by what they see in the life of their pagan father.

And Paul wants to clear that up by basically saying to these believing spouses, ***“Don’t worry about the children being defiled by the unbelieving parent - the opposite is true. Light is always more powerful than darkness.”***

Let them see the light of God shine in your life and it will expose and dispel the darkness. But do it in a loving way. Never put down your spouse but love them and let your children see the love that God has given to you for your spouse.

And think about how important your influence can be upon your children. They have at least one parent who loves the Lord, and who tells them the gospel story. There is a strong possibility of their being saved.

Not an easy section but an important one.

And this last section deals with those who are married to unbelievers and want to leave their marriage. Listen to what Paul has to say about this.

#### VERSES 15-16

We have talked about this a little already. If you are married to an unbeliever don’t make their life so miserable that anyone would want to leave you! You love them, care for them, as Christ has called you.

Now here is the problem. Many times, as one in this relationship gets saved, and he or she may have been horrible, but now they are a loving and caring spouse, and yet the other person wants this “Jesus Freak” to leave! Why is that?

Because light and darkness don't mix and no matter how nice you treat them, it may be too much for them and they will leave you.

That is the key, you don't leave them, they leave you!

And, like I have said, you do all that you can so that they would be saved.

I have seen one woman who has been married to an unbelieving husband for years and she continues to love him and pray for him. She even asks him if she can go to Bible studies or whatever.

Now that may seem outrageous to you but put yourself in this husbands' position. He does not want to go to these studies and she wants to make sure it is okay if she goes. And the beautiful thing here is that he lets her go!

That is true love and we continue to pray for his salvation!

But, like today, much of the early church did not want to heed God's Word and keep their marriages together with unbelievers. In fact, one of the great heathen complaints against the early Christians was that Christianity broke up families. One of the first charges brought against Christians was "tampering with domestic relationships." (Barclay)

Remember, we are not only a light to our spouses, we are not only a light to our families, but also, we are a light to the world! May we shine so brightly that they may see our love, our good works, and glorify our Father in Heaven!

Now we are not going to finish this chapter up tonight, we will do that next time. I thought it was important to deal with this subject of marriage and divorce and I hopefully answered some of your questions in regard to these topics. You might not like what I have said, but don't shoot the messenger. If you don't like it, then read what the Scriptures say, and pray that God would change your heart on this matter to be like His heart!

Before I close this evening, I want to share these words with you in regard to marriage and I pray that it opens our eyes because I think much of what the world thinks about marriage has infiltrated the church. We are told,

Our approach to marriage is self-serving rather than selfless other-serving. Tara Parker-Pope wrote a New York Times article entitled “The Happy Marriage is the ‘Me’ Marriage.” “The notion that the best marriages are those that bring satisfaction to the individual may seem counterintuitive. After all, isn’t marriage supposed to be about putting the relationship first? Not anymore. For centuries marriage was viewed as an economic and social institution, and the emotional and intellectual needs were secondary to the survival of the marriage itself. But in modern relationships people are looking for a partnership. They want partners who make their lives more interesting, who help each of them attain their respective value goals. So marriage is supposed to be about “us,” but in our modern culture it has become about “me.” It’s all about me.

In the 2002 National Marriage Project, Barbara Defoe Whitehead wrote an article entitled “Why Men Won’t Commit.” This was her conclusion: “. . . many men said that they wouldn’t marry until they found a perfect soul mate who was perfectly compatible with them.” If people think, “I need a perfect, compatible soul mate . . .” this can be a problem. This is different from people who think, “I want to have a friend I can have deep friendship with.”

Timothy Keller summarizes it this way: There are two key factors for having this so-called new idealism. The first is *physical attractiveness* and *sexual chemistry*. In other words, the other person has to be extremely physically attractive. Secondly, *compatibility*. Compatibility means “they wanted someone who has the willingness to take you in as you are and not to change you.”

Oftentimes there is resentment when one person in a relationship wants to change the other. Men want a woman who fits into their lives, who will be truly compatible with them, and who will not want to change them. If that's what people want in a relationship, they will remain single for a long time. A deeply devoted loyal relationship requires a surrendering of one's independence.

- Stephen T. Um, 1 Corinthians – The Word of the Cross, pp. 126-127

Men, if that is the kind of relationship you are looking for then you are looking to marry a robot because you can go and program them the way you want.

But God has not given us robots for wives or husbands because there is no love in that kind of relationship.

Think about our relationship with God. He gave us a free will and we can choose to love Him or reject Him.

And that goes for marriage as well. We have a free will and out of that, as we come together in marriage, we see that love for each other that will continue to grow until death separates. At least it should!



Let me leave you with this, what a marriage relationship is all about. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:22-32, **“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”**

May our marriages as well as our lives be a light to a world that is so confused about how to live!