

I Corinthians Lesson # 18
The Bible's Directions to the Unmarried
Pentwater Bible Church
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I 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.

Paul was responding to questions that were posed to him through a written letter (I Cor 7:1) when he stated that he did not have a specific commandment from Christ on this issue of young unmarried women. This simply means that Christ did not speak specifically but Paul with apostolic authority could set commandments. Some say that since it is only Paul speaking and not Christ the judgment given by Paul has no authority. This is not the case since he is an apostle converted and commissioned by Christ.

I 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.

There was much persecution coming from the Romans in the near future and the culture in general so Paul advised young women to avoid marrying if they were so led by the Lord. Further, in most cultures Christianity is persecuted. We have been living a life of wonderful persecution free existence in this country. It is not so in many places and times over Church history since Christ's ascension. Once they were married and began producing children the persecution would particularly painful. Paul also knew the situation the world will be in just prior to Christ's return and he taught that it will be a time of great distress where believers are severely persecuted. Paul did not know when the Lord's return would be and he warned about what the time would be like. We have Christ Himself telling us about these things in His Olivet Discourse. Paul only wanted to warn and not to harm anyone by denying him or her marriage.

I Corinthians 7: 27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

So Paul simply says if possible stay in whatever situation you find yourself when you are converted. Don't divorce if you are married to an unbeliever or avoid marriage if you are so led if you are unmarried.

I 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.

Paul here clarifies what he has been saying lest there be any misunderstanding. It is not sinful to marry. That would be totally inconsistent with Scripture. God wants us to be married. He created us in this way and unless we sense the particular leading for remaining single Paul wants to make it clear that we are not sinning in any way if we get married. He refers to the trouble in the flesh as the extra burden of caring for others in a marriage and family. We have many difficulties in marriages and in a situation where governmental persecutions are imminent then it is best to minimize the exposure of that persecution to an individual instead of an entire family.

I Corinthians 7: 29-30 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; 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;

Another reason Paul expressed was the advantages singleness offered was the potential it offered for detachment from temporal situations. The phrase *the time is short* referred to the Lord's return (Rom. 13:11), but it was also a summary philosophy of life for Paul who lived not for the temporary but for the eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). This detachment from temporal matters should characterize all Christians but it was more complex for the married (Mark 13:12) for whom, nonetheless, devotion to their Lord should occupy first place in life (Luke 14:26). Paul certainly was not recommending abandoning marital duties (1 Cor. 7:3-5).

Instead he was calling for a commitment to eternal matters and a corresponding detachment from the institutions, values, and substance of this world, which was passing away (I Cor 7: 31). Such a commitment was more easily made and enacted by a single person.

I Corinthians 7: 31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

As has been the general theme of the entire epistle we must *not* fashion our lives in any way after the culture. It is OK to have the world laugh at us or condemn us for not following their ways. We must live Spirit led lives detached from this world. If we have been blessed with material things and resources then we can use them to further God's Kingdom. Those of us who have material blessings must use them to bless others. We must not get attached to anything in this world. It is easy to do. All the things in this world will pass away. This will happen at our deaths and when God sets up His kingdom.

I Corinthians 7: 32-34 But I would have you without carefulness (anxiety). He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. 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.

The single state has potentially fewer encumbrances and distractions than the married state, so it more easily facilitates a spirit of undivided devotion to the Lord.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned His followers against letting concern for the material aspects of this life distract them from devotion to God.

Matthew 6:25-34 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The poor widow (Mark 12:44) gave all her material sustenance to God as an act of singular devotion. A married man or woman with a needful concern for the well being of his family would have been less likely to do that. The situation illustrates Paul's point that the single life with its greater simplicity in obligations allows a potentially greater commitment of time, resources, and self to the Lord than would be possible for a married person dutifully carrying out the marital and familial obligations attached to that state.

I 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.

Paul is not saying these things to apply guilt to unmarried young women. Scripture does say in many places that we were made to marry (Genesis 2:24; Mark 9:10; Matt 9:16 etc.). He is simply saying that a single person can do the work of the Lord without having to fulfill the marital obligations. Within a marriage there are many obligations and if one is unmarried then they are free from the time consuming activities one must attend to within a proper Christian marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38 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. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

Paul, then, gave advice to the father of a young woman. A father may have decided that his daughter should not marry, possibly due to reasons similar to those Paul had mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:25-34. The father *should* be actively assessing the potential suitors to his daughter to prevent unequal yoking and the future hardships and heartache that would cause. It is his responsibility to inform her of God's will for her life and not let her fall victim to the culture.

In coming to this decision, the father should be aware of the fact that his daughter might not be able to remain single. She might not possess the gift of celibacy. If so, Paul recommended that the father should not feel obligated to hold to any previous commitment he might have made regarding her potential celibacy, instead let his daughter marry.

The father should feel free to follow through on his conviction to keep his daughter single if he was convinced about the propriety of her celibacy.

Paul writes that the person who marries does good but the person who does not does better since that person will have more time to devote to God. Again this is only for those chosen to be celibate. If there is any sexual desire than that is the signal that marriage is the correct path and that is not a sin.

1 Corinthians 7: 39-40 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. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

Paul's earlier counseled to widows to remain single. In that previous context, however, he acknowledged the fact that not all were equipped to do so. The only constraint Paul placed on a widow who sought remarriage was the obligation to marry another Christian. This is an obligation, which is meant to apply to all who desired to be married. Some denominations falsely teach that once married an individual cannot ever marry again even upon the death of their spouse. Some call this eternal sealing. It is unbiblical and corrected here. The only condition for a widow/widower is to marry a believer. If the widow/widower can remain single they should to carry out God's work. But if they still have sexual desire they must exercise it within a Christian marriage and not fornicate. Paul affirms the strength of His words in having the Spirit of God teaching him. Paul was chosen by Christ to bring a substantial part of the New Testament to the Church. This is not his opinion it is Christ's Law. We must carefully know it and follow it. There are no exceptions for a Christian. There is a large distinction between what we read about people doing in the NT and specific direct commandments. It is the commandments we are responsible to follow.

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