

1 Corinthians 7:1-24

One Point: Biblical principles should shape my pursuit of God and marriage.

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Introduction:

Here is some context that we need to know about Corinthian Christians.

Corinth was an important port city. Since it was a port city, ships brought many different kinds of people. So, it was a melting pot of people.

Paul planted the church at Corinth. The first Christians in the church were either former Jews or Greeks.

The major goddess of Corinth was Aphrodite. There was a temple dedicated to her there. If you lived in Corinth, you would go to the temple of Aphrodite. As a result, temple prostitution flourished in Corinth. Therefore, it is probable to conclude that the Greek Christians at Corinth were shaped by these experiences. Some of the new Christians at Corinth had an unbiblical view of sex, marriage, and the pursuit of God.

1 Corinthians 7 puts us on a trajectory to receive biblical principles to apply to God and marriage today.

Pursue a mutual passion for God and spouse (verses 1-9).

Verse 2

Paul says that one of the reasons marriage exists is because of “**immoralities**”. The Greek word for immoralities is **PORNEIAS**, where we get the word pornography. **PORNEIA** is a word with multiple meanings that covers a range of sexual immorality.

We learn a principle from this: As fallen human beings, we have a distorted view of sex. Marriage is God's beautiful gift to help us pursue God along with a desire for sex. Notice then that Paul says that a man must have his own exclusive relationship with his wife and vice versa. Before a Greek man became a Christian, he could potentially have had a wife while going to the temple of Aphrodite. In Greek culture, sexual exclusivity was not a value.

Humans are sexual creatures. This is why you must passionately pursue an exclusive relationship with someone of the opposite sex that ends in covenant marriage.

Verses 3-4

Here we see the extent of this covenant relationship. Paul proposes mutual authority in a marriage relationship.

As a Christian, we know that our life is not our own. Paul says something like, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” A similar principle operates in a marriage. As a Christian husband or wife, you do not merely belong to yourself, but to the other person. And we have a duty to fulfill to them. The Greek word for “fulfill” is **APODIDOTO**.

It’s about giving something away. The Greek word for “duty” is **OPHEILEN**, which means a debt. In marriage, we owe a debt to one another. As a result, we give ourselves away. This passage solves the Chauvinism that many in culture believe dominates Christianity. Remember, these are principles, not hard and fast rules.

Verses 5-6

Paul’s advice for the Christian couple is to stop depriving one another. But, there is an exception. Paul teaches us that there are times in marriage when a pursuit of God must come before the passion of sex. Paul teaches that there are times when spouses must focus and devote themselves to God alone. The Greek word for “devote” is **SCHOLASETE**. It literally means “to go on holiday”. There are times within a Christian marriage when a spouse must go on holiday from the routine to fully devote themselves to God. And that holiday is prayer. But this devotion to prayer must be mutually agreed upon. Why? Because the Enemy will use immorality, **PORNEIA**, to tempt.

Paul’s ultimate answer to the enemy’s tactic is to develop a life of single pursuit of God alone. Note that Paul says that this is a concession, not a commandment. His desire for Christian marriage is for each spouse to passionately pursue God and one another exclusively.

Approach marriage with biblical sensitivity (verses 10-16).

From verses 10-16, we see what the questions could be.
What if one spouse becomes a Christ follower and the other doesn’t?
What if the non-believing spouse leaves?
What should a Christ-follower focus on if their non-believing spouse stays?
And Paul addresses all of these questions with biblical sensitivity.

Verses 10-11

We get an overarching principle from this verse. Christ followers should not actively leave a marriage covenant. The Greek word for “leave” is **CHORISTHENAI**. It is a **passive** verb. Meaning, the person is not actively completing the action. It is being done to them. It should literally say, “**The wife should not be left by her husband.**” Paul knows that a Christian spouse will be left. When this happens, Paul encourages two actions: Remain unmarried (to pursue Christ alone), or seek reconciliation.

Verses 12-13

Paul approaches a situation of a Christ follower who is married to a non-believer. Paul encourages the Christ-follower to stay in the marriage covenant. And here, we read the word “**divorce**”. The Greek word used here is **APHIETO**. This the Greek word for forgiveness.

It literally means to take something and throw it away. This is what God did with our sins through Jesus. The Christian spouse must not separate or throw away the unbelieving spouse if they want to stay.

Verse 14

We see Paul's reasoning. Paul says that the unbelieving spouse is "**sanctified**" through the believing spouse. The Greek word for "**sanctified**" is **HEGIASTAI**. The root word is **HAGIOS**, which means holy. It is a **passive** verb. It literally means, "**To be made holy**". So, Paul is saying that a husband is made holy through his wife.

Verses 15-16

Here Paul writes about the opposite case. What if it isn't the Christ-follower, but an unbelieving spouse who leaves? Paul says, "Let him leave." Paul says that the Christian spouse who is left by an unbeliever is not under bondage. The Greek word for bondage is "**DEDOULOTAI**". The root of this word is **DOULOS** which means "**slave**". It is another **passive** verb, so it means "**to be enslaved**". The Christian spouse who is left by an unbeliever is no longer enslaved to that relationship. And if you are not a slave, then you are free. And in this freedom, God calls the Christ-following spouse who was left to peace. There is one more principle that we need to help the Christ-follower no matter what may happen in marriage.

Find contentment in your calling.

Verses 17-24

Now Paul takes a break from talking about marriage. He begins to discuss circumcision and slavery. Corinth has both Jewish Christians and Greek Christians. The Jewish Christian males would have been circumcised. This was a sign of obedience to Yahweh, the Father of Jesus. Some of the Greek Christians may have been slaves.

Paul tells both types of Christians this: Walk in the manner in which you were called. It seems that perhaps the Jewish Christians thought their circumcision was important and that the Greek Christians should be circumcised. Paul's counsel is this: Don't pursue circumcision and don't think circumcision makes you more worthy. This is why Paul says in verse 19, Circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing. In verse 20, Paul says, "remain in that condition in which he was called".

Paul then applies the same concept to slavery. If a slave became a Christ-follower, Paul did not want them to worry about their status in life. Paul did not want the Christian slave to think they were less worthy because they were a slave. But, if they could achieve freedom, he encouraged them to do so. Paul told the Christ-followers who were also slaves that they were free in Christ. Then, Paul says that Christians who are free are slaves in Christ.

Why does he say this? He says it because of verse 23.

Both the Christian who is slave and free were bought by Christ. Both should live for Christ, no matter their situation here on earth. This is Paul's call for contentment. Your life status does not matter! Christ died for you and purchased you! You are valuable to Him!