

# **Life-Sharing Bible Study Series**

## **“Love Is The Answer”**

***Come Be A Part Of A Small Group***

**Glenville New Life Community Church  
And  
Calvary Presbyterian Church**

**Life-Sharing Lesson 1—“What Are The Dating Rules” Proverbs 4:20-24, 2  
Corinthians 6:14-18 1 Samuel 16:6-7**

**Life-Sharing Lesson 2 “What Happened In My Marriage” 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 1  
Corinthians 7:26-28, 32-35**

**Life-Sharing Lesson 3 “Can Divorce Ever Be The Answer” Exodus 21:10-11,  
Deuteronomy 24:1, Matthew 19:1-10 1 Corinthians 7:10-16**

**Life-Sharing Lesson 4 “Choosing To Be Single” 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, 32-35**

**Life-Sharing Lesson 1—“What Are The Dating Rules” Proverbs 4:20-24, 2  
Corinthians 6:14-18 1 Samuel 16:6-7**

1. What do you think is the purpose of dating?

**The purpose of dating is to discover if you have something in common with another person on which a friendship could be built. The best marriages involve people who enjoy each others as friends.**

2. In the bible marriages were often arranged? What are the pros and cons of this position?

***Some of the pro's is that it meant more people got married because they were arranged in advance. People went into marriage expecting to make a change in adapting to be with this other person. People often knew the families they were marrying into. People knew what roles were expected of them. People expected to grow a love or an appreciation for their spouse.***

***The downside is that it did not take the couple's personality and individuality into account. It often meant younger brides with much older men. It eliminated the choice a person would have as to whom they would spend their lives with. It took some of the romance out of the beginning of the marriage.***

**Proverbs 4:20-24** Today's New International Version (TNIV) <sup>20</sup> My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. <sup>21</sup> Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; <sup>22</sup> for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body. <sup>23</sup> Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

3. What do we mean when we say go out on a date? How do you guard your heart on a date?

***There is nothing in the bible about dating per se because dating was not part of the culture. To go out on a date should mean setting aside some time to having the opportunity to learn something more about another person. You guard your heart by determining in advance that you are looking for someone as a possible friend, rather than as a possible lover. Your choice of where you date should be***

***geared to learning information about the person, not geared to sweeping you or the other person off their feet. The church would be a good place to start.***

## **2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Today's New International Version (TNIV)**

### ***Warning Against Idolatry***

<sup>14</sup> Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? <sup>15</sup> What harmony is there between Christ and Belial<sup>[a]</sup>? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

“I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>17</sup> Therefore, “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>18</sup> And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”<sup>[d]</sup>

### **COMMENTARY**

**Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.**<sup>NIV</sup> After passionately appealing to the Corinthians to open their hearts to him, Paul exhorted them to *not be yoked together with unbelievers*. He urged them not to form binding relationships with nonbelievers because this might weaken their Christian commitment, integrity, or standards.

Earlier, Paul had explained that not associating with unbelievers did not mean isolation from nonbelievers (see [1 Corinthians 5:9-10](#)). The Corinthians were even to remain with their unbelieving spouses ([1 Corinthians 7:12-13](#)). In order to witness to their neighbors, believers were to adopt some of the customs of the people to whom they were witnessing: "I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ" ([1 Corinthians 9:22](#) NLT).

So what did it mean to avoid being "yoked together with unbelievers"? The Greek for "yoked together" was used in the first century for the act of harnessing animals together. It was against God's law to yoke together animals with different degrees of strength, such as an ox and a mule, because the plow would be pulled unevenly or the weight being carried would be spilled (see [Deuteronomy 22:10](#)). In the same way, a believer and an unbeliever are categorically different. Partnering with unbelievers would lead to disaster.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul had forbidden the Corinthians from submitting their disputes to a secular judge ([6:1-6](#)). He had admonished them to refrain from

sexual immorality, especially the prostitution of the Greek temples (see [6:12-20](#)). He had even expressed astonishment that they hadn't expelled a member of the church who had persisted in having an affair with his stepmother ([5:1-13](#)). Moreover, he had told them to refrain from participating in feasts that honored local gods (see [10:6-22](#)). Any of these specific issues, especially the feasts to local gods, could be considered as being *yoked together with unbelievers*. Apparently the Corinthian church was having a difficult time separating themselves from the immoral practices of their unbelieving neighbors. Paul was telling the Corinthians to avoid any situation that would compromise their faith or their Christian morals. While this verse applies to all partnerships and alliances, marriage certainly comes under this teaching.

---

### ***LIFE APPLICATION***

#### **MARRIAGE YOKE**

Paul said, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." This certainly applies to marriage. While Paul didn't want the new believers to divorce their unbelieving spouses (see [1 Corinthians 7:12-13](#)), he certainly did not encourage single believers to enter into marriage with unbelievers. Such marriages cannot have unity in the most important issue in life—commitment and obedience to God. Because marriage involves two people becoming one, faith may become an issue, and one spouse may have to compromise beliefs for the sake of unity. Many people discount this problem only to regret it later. Don't allow emotion or passion to blind you to the ultimate importance of marrying someone with whom you can be united spiritually.

---

For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?<sup>NIV</sup> These two rhetorical questions highlight the ethical difference between believers and unbelievers. The first question emphasizes that Christians, as recipients of God's *righteousness* through Jesus, are to live righteous lives here on earth. In contrast, unbelievers do not pay attention to God's law and are dedicated to *wickedness*. Obviously, they have nothing *in common*.

The second question emphasizes that Christians are committed to the truth. In Scripture, "light" often refers to God's truth, his gospel message, which had penetrated the darkness of this world ([4:4-5](#); see [1 Corinthians 4:5](#)). John called

Jesus the light of the world, a term Jesus had used to describe himself (see [John 1:4-7](#); [3:19-21](#)). And John used the image of light to describe God's salvation ([John 1:5](#); [3:19](#); [8:12](#)). In contrast, "darkness" refers to the chaos that reigns when lies and deceptions pass for the truth, when evil is considered good and good is considered evil (see [Romans 1:25-26](#)). Obviously, light and darkness cannot have any *fellowship*.

**See Also:**

[Chart: Light Versus Darkness](#)

What harmony can there be between Christ and the Devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever?<sup>NLT</sup> Paul continued his series of rhetorical questions with two questions that underscore the religious differences between believers and unbelievers.

---

### ***LIFE APPLICATION***

#### **BUSINESS PARTNERS**

What would Paul say about a Christian in a business partnership with an unbeliever? Much of what Paul said about marriage in [1 Corinthians 7:12-13](#) would apply. If we are already in a partnership, we should not disrupt it. When entering into a new partnership, however, we must be very careful.

We court disaster when we enter into partnership with unbelievers, because our very foundations differ. While one serves the Lord, the other does not recognize God's authority. Inevitably, the one who serves God is faced with the temptation to compromise values. When that happens, spiritual disaster results.

There are important basic guidelines for partnerships. Before entering into a partnership, ask

I What are my motives?

I What problems am I avoiding by seeking this partnership?

I Is this partnership the best solution, or is it only a quick fix to my problem?

I Have I prayed or asked others to pray for guidance?

I Are my partner and I really working toward the same goals?

I Am I willing to settle for less financial gain in order to do what

---

## God wants?

---

The third rhetorical question contrasts the great difference *between Christ and the Devil*. The Greek word *beliar* is translated "the Devil." This is the only place that this Greek word is used in the New Testament, although Jewish literature from the first century commonly used it for Satan. The Greek word is derived from a Hebrew word that means "worthlessness" or "lawlessness."

Since believers are intimately connected to Jesus Christ ([5:20-21](#)), they cannot have any fellowship with the things of the Devil. Unbelievers, in contrast, are being deceived and enticed by Satan ([4:3-4](#)). Their motivations and actions come from their own self-interest and not from a profound reverence for God ([Romans 2:8](#)).

The fourth rhetorical question reiterates that believers and unbelievers can never truly *partner* together. In Greek, the word for "partner" means to hold some property, such as land, in common. Thus, with these penetrating questions, Paul seemed to be advising the Corinthians to be wary of entering into associations that by their very nature might compromise their Christian morals.

[6:16-18](#) What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.<sup>NIV</sup> In his earlier letter to the Corinthians, Paul had used the image of *the temple* of God to designate the community of believers in Corinth ([1 Corinthians 3:16](#)). Later, Paul also used the image of the "temple of the living God" to refer to individual believers ([1 Corinthians 6:18-20](#)). In this passage, however, Paul used the plural.

Thus, in Paul's fifth rhetorical question, he was referring not to individual believers but to the community of faith as *the temple of God*. As building blocks of this glorious temple, each individual had to maintain a holy life, set apart to God. There was no room for any mixed loyalties. No compromise or agreement had been made between the true God and other so-called gods.

With these five short rhetorical questions, Paul was emphasizing the absurdity of Christians continuing to associate with idols or idol worship.

---

### LIFE APPLICATION

#### LIVING CHURCH

Quoting from the prophet Isaiah, Paul asserted that the church is the temple of the living God. Corinth had an abundance of temples of

---

pagan deities, so the recipients of his letter were able to visualize the contrast the apostle intended. Those who follow Christ are not known by a building or the address where their worship services are held. They are known as those in whom the Spirit of God lives. It is easy to become identified with a place of worship. But the church is not where believers go; it is who they are. God is not waiting for his people in some stained-glass setting. He is always with them. That is a sobering and yet a comforting thought. How does your behavior reflect on the God you represent? How does the knowledge of God being in you at all times give you boldness to articulate your faith with confidence?

---

As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."<sup>NIV</sup> Several Old Testament quotes illustrate how the church at Corinth was a fulfillment of God's promises long ago. When God brought the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, he made them his holy people. He had them construct a tabernacle, where his glorious presence would reside in its inner sanctuary. In this sense, God would *live with them—even walk among them*. He wasn't going to be a far-off God, who watched the Israelites from a distance. The Israelites were his people, and he would be intimately connected to them (see [Leviticus 26:11-12](#)).

The prophet Ezekiel also prophesied of a time when God would live among his people forever (see [Ezekiel 37:26-28](#)). By quoting this passage, Paul was saying that Ezekiel's prophecy was being fulfilled in the Corinthian church. Jesus, a descendant of David and the Son of God himself, had defeated Satan. He had begun his reign as the King of a heavenly kingdom. As believers, the Corinthians were part of this spiritual kingdom. Jesus, as God in human form, had literally shown people what God was like ([Matthew 1:23](#); [John 1:14](#)). In a real sense, God had lived among his people. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, God sent his Holy Spirit to the believers who had gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. From that day to the present, every believer has God living within his or her spirit ([Romans 8:9](#); [1 Corinthians 6:19](#); [2 Timothy 1:14](#)).

"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."<sup>NIV</sup> After his first negative command to the Corinthians—to not partner with unbelievers—Paul quickly gave them a positive command. Instead of partnering with unbelievers, they were to *be separate* from anything that was *unclean* or anything sinful.

To emphasize his point, Paul strung together several Old Testament quotes. He loosely quoted [Isaiah 52:11](#): "Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing!" (NIV). Originally this was a command for the exiles to come out of

Babylon and to abandon any object associated with pagan worship. In this passage, Paul interpreted this command as also a command to Christians to separate themselves from the immorality of the pagan peoples around them.

Paul continued his comparison of the Corinthian Christians with the returning Israelite exiles. The phrase "I will receive you" is an adaptation of Ezekiel's prophecy that God would gather all of Israel's exiles together (see [Ezekiel 20:34](#)). Finally, Paul adapted God's promise to be the Father of David's Son (see [2 Samuel 7:14](#); see also [Hebrews 1:5](#), where the author interpreted this verse as a prophecy about Jesus) to also refer to believers. Christians would become the *sons and daughters* of God (see [Isaiah 43:6](#) where Isaiah prophesied of a time when God would gather all his sons and daughters together). Through Christ's death, believers have become part of God's loving family (see [Galatians 4:1-7](#)).

---

## LIFE APPLICATION

### SEPARATION

Separation from the world involves more than keeping our distance from sinners; it means staying close to God (see [7:1-2](#)). More than avoiding entertainment that leads to sin, it extends into how we spend our time and money. There is no way to separate ourselves totally from all sinful influences. Nevertheless, we are to resist the sin around us, without either giving up or giving in. When you know what God wants you to do, make a clean break with sinful practices.

---

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Corinthians.

4. Under what circumstances if any could a believer date a non believer?

***Remember, the bible is silent on dating. We therefore have to go by principles. The purpose of a date should be to learn something about another person, not to enter into a marriage relationship or to go off into an exclusive relationship. There are obviously some people believers should not date because of the person's reputation or the person's previous interactions with the person. If a person is looking for someone to marry when dating, that person should be looking for a believer, because they have already made up their minds what their goal is. A person should draw back from continuing to date a non-believer when it is obvious the person is not interested in Jesus Christ. I don't think the unequal yoke verse applies to dating a person once or twice. The moment a***

***person begins to feel a strong attraction toward another person, this verse should take pre-imminence. Unbelievers are great at pulling saints out of the church who will not stand on their principles early in the relationship. Time works against a believer in a relationship with a non-believer. The more your heart has been given to a person, the more likely you are to justify not only the relationship, but the behavior inside the relationship as well.***

5. How should one decide if they are ready to date?

**One should ask, am I becoming the person God wants me to be right now in my life. One should ask, what does he or she hope to gain by going on a date. What would he or she hope to gain by possibly becoming involved with this person? One should ask, are they committed enough to Jesus to walk away from this person if it comes to a compromising of values. One should ask, God is this your will and plan for my life at this stage of life.**

6. What are some realistic guidelines a person should have prior to dating?

**Let the person know that you are committed to Jesus Christ from the start. Have the date in a safe public space. Let someone else know that you are going on this date. Have some questions in your head about what you want to know about this other person. Do an honest evaluation of the date with yourself.**

7. How important is it to have others you trust know that you are beginning to get serious about someone?

**We live in a mind your own business society that we have allowed to creep into the church. We all need balance and objectivity in making good decisions. When we are in love, it's hard to see things that are obvious to others. It is a good thing to take into consideration the wisdom and counsel of others. God speaks to us through other people. We need to grow in our willingness to trust our brothers and sisters in Christ. The first time your pastors meet someone should not be at the announcement of an engagement, or in a private meeting to announce a pregnancy.**

**Proverbs 15:22 (NIV) <sup>22</sup> Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. We should be willing to let others help us to make the right decision.**

8. What is the difference between having chemistry together and having a commitment to each other?

**Chemistry can take place between individuals who have very little in common. Chemistry can arise simply from sharing with someone on the internet whom you've never met. Chemistry can take place with very little effort on the part of the other person to do anything. Commitment involves both people making a sacrifice to pursue the same course of action for a common goal. Commitment will not happen by accident. Commitment is a pledge and a promise to do what's best for the other person even when it hurts. Chemistry lasts only as long as the feelings last. Commitment is there when times are good and bad.**

### **1 Samuel 16:6-7 Today's New International Version (TNIV)**

<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

**We can tell how men and women look, but God can tell what they are. He judges of men by the heart. We often form a mistaken judgment of characters; but the Lord values only the faith, fear, and love, which are planted in the heart, beyond human discernment. And God does not favour our children according to our fond partiality, but often most honours and blesses those who have been least regarded.** Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.

9. How big of a role should how the other person looks play in the choice of a date?

**Looks are important, but they can be very deceiving. Looks are not what should hold a relationship together, because everybody's looks are going to change. It is far better to have someone who loves you, than someone you want to impress others with because of their appearance. The potential success of a relationship allows for a person to look beyond looks to see the character or the heart of a person. Remember, nobody looks very handsome or beautiful when you are very upset and angry with them because of their actions. It is far better to be happier with an average looking person, than to be miserable with somebody everybody else is going crazy over.**

10. Should every date be seen as a potential mate or should you just go out and have a good time?

**This is tricky. The reality is, every date could be a potential mate. That's why it is important to do some early screening. Probably more true is that every 3<sup>rd</sup> time date is a potential mate, if they have gotten that far along in the process. You really do need to know a person's background by the third time out, because an emotional bond is beginning to take place on some level.**

11. What is the role of sexual activity in dating for Christians? Should couples test drive each other sexually?

Christians who become sexually involved with each other before marriage are outside of God's will for their lives. The behavior may be fun and it may feel great, but it is still sin and all sin leads to death and destruction. We can't ask God to bless our deliberate wrong doing and choice to sin. We will pay a price for our actions. The idea of test driving each other is from Satan and not from God. Sex is going to take up less than 1% of the time you are married. Great sex does not mean a great marriage. God

intended for couples to grow in their knowledge of how to please each other sexually inside of the marriage. God's Spirit is involved when a Christian has sex. Sex should be done to the glory of God with God's smiling upon it. That can only happen in a marriage relationship.

12. Should dating stress more of a desire for purity or a desire for how far can I go without sinning. What's the difference in the heart of the person.

**The temptation will be to go as far as I can, without sinning. God's desire is for us to want to keep all of our relationships as pure as possible so that we do not force ourselves into making decisions for the wrong person. Our goal should be to go as slow as possible in order to keep all of our options open for God.**

## Life-Sharing Lesson 2 “What Happened In My Marriage” 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 1 Corinthians 7:26-28, 32-35

1. What do you admire about couples who have been married for many years and are still glad they married each other?

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8** Today's New International Version (TNIV) <sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails

### Commentary

Paul shifted from the first person to the third person and replaced himself with a personification of love. Some have seen in [verses 4-6](#) the fruit of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)); others have seen here a description of Christ Himself. As different sides of the same coin, both are applicable and provided a solution to the many Corinthian problems. Love, defined by 14 predications (half of them negative, half positive) constituted the “way.” **Love**, Paul wrote, **is patient... kind... does not envy or boast, and is not proud.**

Patience (*makrothymia*) is the capacity to be wronged and not retaliate. The Corinthian church had many members who had been wronged (e.g., in lawsuits [[1 Cor. 6:8](#)] and the poor at communal meals [[11:21-22](#)]). The response of love to these wrongs would be a display of kindness and goodness. Envy and boasting seemed to abound as two poles of the same problem (e.g., divisions [[1:10](#); [3:3](#), [21](#)]; gifts [[12:14-25](#)]). The Corinthians had no monopoly on pride though they seemed to. The verb *physioō* occurs only seven times in the New Testament, six of which are found in this letter (cf. [4:6](#), [18-19](#); [5:2](#); [8:1](#)).

**13:5.** Paul then gave four negative descriptions of love: **It is not rude** nor **self-seeking** nor **easily angered**, and **it keeps no record of wrongs**. Rudeness found expression in the problem of women in worship ([11:2-16](#)), the disorders at the Lord's Supper ([11:17-22](#)), and the general organization of worship ([14:26-33](#)). Self-satisfaction was a pervasive disorder particularly manifested in the eating of food sacrificed to idols ([8:9](#); [10:23-24](#)). People who are not easily angered usually do not start lawsuits (as in [6:1-11](#)). Love does not record wrongs, though there was ample opportunity for doing so in Corinth (e.g., [6:8](#); [7:5](#); [8:11](#)).

**13:6.** Love does not delight in evil (e.g., incest [[5:1-2](#), [8](#)]), but rejoices in truth ([5:8](#)).

**13:7.** Love always protects (cf. [8:13](#)), trusts (cf. [15:11](#)), hopes (cf. [9:10](#), [23](#)), and perseveres (*hypomenei*, “remains steadfast in the face of unpleasant circumstances”; cf. [9:19-22](#)).

**13:8.** Following this elaboration of the preeminence ([vv. 1-3](#)) and perfections ([vv. 4-7](#)) of love, Paul concluded with a discussion of its permanence ([vv. 8-13](#)). Love never fails, in the sense it will never come to an end. Positively stated, it is eternal.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

2. Which 3 of the above definitions of love do you think need to be stressed more at the beginning of a marriage?

Answers will vary. There is no right or wrong answer because it asks what do you think.

**1 Corinthians 7:26-28** Today's New International Version (TNIV)<sup>26</sup> Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is.<sup>27</sup> Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife.<sup>28</sup> But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

The basic principle Paul had been setting forth (viz., to continue in one's present position) was then applied to those who had never married. Apparently this was in response to a question put to him. Paul urged them to remain single, for three reasons: (a) an impending time of distress for Christians ([vv. 26-28](#)), (b) the imminent return of Christ ([vv. 29-31](#)), and (c) the opportunity for undistracted service for Christ ([vv. 32-35](#)).

**7:25.** Virgins here were sexually inexperienced people who had never married. Jesus had never specifically addressed the propriety of marriage per se (cf. [Matt.](#)

[19:10-12, 29](#)) but Paul gave his judgment on the issue which they could take as trustworthy counsel. (He of course was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and hence his “judgment” was as authoritative as Christ’s words; cf. [1 Cor. 7:40](#).)

[7:26-28](#). The present crisis may have referred to persecution then being suffered by the Corinthians (cf. [John 16:33](#); [2 Tim. 3:12](#); [1 Peter 4:12](#)) or to an experience of suffering which Paul anticipated would shortly befall them (in which case the words could be trans. “impending crisis”). In view of his silence in the letter about any present suffering on their part the latter point of view (and trans.) is preferred. (Cf. [1 Cor. 4:8](#) which intimates a perceived state of well-being or even positive euphoria.) Still, when persecution came, as Paul felt it surely would, its onslaught could be handled more ably by single than by married persons. However fearsome the thought of martyrdom (cf. [13:3](#)) might be to a single person, it was doubly so to a married person responsible for a spouse and children. With these conditions in view marriage would not be wrong (if you do marry, you have not sinned), but it would be inexpedient.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

3. What type of problems do the bible predict that married couples will have?

Married people do not have the same right of independence to serve the Lord as single people do. This is going to cause conflict when one person feels the Lord leading in one way, and the other feels they should go in another direction. Married people are made up of two people with a sinful nature who are called to surrender that nature to what’s best for the other person. That is going to cause problems in the marriage. Paul has told us what love is and then he tells husbands and wives that they are to love and to serve each other. That’s going to cause some problems.

**1 Corinthians 7:32-35 Today's New International Version (TNIV) <sup>32</sup> I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. <sup>35</sup> I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.**

4. Someone said, if you want to serve Jesus, then stay single. But if you want to become like Jesus, then get married. What do you think the person was trying to say with this statement?

A single person can pack up their bags and go anywhere Jesus tells them to go. Their decisions affect themselves. They can stay longer on assignments without robbing a mate of time that belongs to them. A Married person is going to be living in close proximity to another person with the command to love this other person who is not always going to be so loving. This is going to give the more opportunities to grow in the grace of God. The added tension will allow for them to become more like Jesus.

5. Why is living together not the same thing as being married?

Sex was God's gift to humanity for those who make a complete commitment to each other which includes marriage. Living together is telling God, we don't need to make the commitment, and we will decide how to use sex. Since our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, all sexual activity for a believer involves the Holy Spirit. Is the Holy Spirit being defiled in sexual activity? Are we asking the Holy Spirit to leave our bodies so that we can engage in sex. Sex is a part of our lives that God wants to bless. God wants us to have the highest respect for each other when it comes to sex, and we are not to use one another for our own sexual gratification. The sex is to flow out of our total commitment to each other in the eyes of God and of people. But the penalty for using sex outside of marriage is pretty strong. In the passage below, God excludes those who are engaged in sexual immorality from heaven.

### **Revelation 22:11-15 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup> Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy." <sup>12</sup> "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. <sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. <sup>14</sup> "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. <sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

### **Hebrews 13:4 (NIV)**

<sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

6. Why is it important in marriage to know that men and women do not think alike?

**We often try to love people in the way we want to be loved. Men and women were created two different types of beings with different ways of arriving at solutions to the same problem. There are differences within the various members of each sex themselves in approaching problems and solutions. We make a lot of assumptions about people in our relationships. If we do not factor in that the other person thinks differently than I do, many of our assumptions about them and their actions are going to be wrong. The more we learn about what works and does not work in marriage relationships, the greater our chances are of succeeding in them.**

7. What are some unrealistic expectations people have of marriage itself?

**People think that if they have found the right person, then the relationship should just naturally flow and keep getting better on its own. It will not without additional hard work. People think the other person will somehow understand their needs and meet them without having to tell them the situation. Women think men are going to be great emotional support around the clock and look**

**eagerly to sharing their thoughts and ideas. Men think women are going to present themselves as a delightful sexual menu on a non stop basis. Men will sometimes act as though sex will fix just about any relationship issue. Women will be surprised at how insensitive men can be toward their feelings and really not have a clue to what the real problem is.**

8. What are some of the boundaries a married couple has to set when it comes to their families and friends?

**A couple cannot let others attack their spouse and let it go unchallenged. A couple cannot allow others to divide them into making a decision that really should only be made with the full knowledge and support of the other spouse. Couples should not discuss their problems with families and friends unless they are also going to share their solutions and makeup. Couples should not allow families and friends to set up their schedules. The couple must look out for itself.**

9. What are some of the boundaries a married couple has to set when it comes to their own children?

**Couples need time together apart from their children. Couples need to let children know they are loved, but they come after the spouse. Couples cannot let children divide and manipulate them into getting their own way. Couples should agree together before loaning money to adult children or allowing them to live in their home.**

10. What are the benefits of being part of a marriage support group like “Marriage Sensation”.

**You recognize your problems are not unique and that others may have a solution you have not thought of before. You gain wisdom and insight from teachings on communication, sharing your feelings, encouraging one another, handling money, learning how to disagree and a range of other topics. You get to meet people who have been where you are as well as people who are where you are seeking the same help. You get to help build up other couples. You find you are not in the struggle alone to have a great marriage and that others are working hard to have one as well.**

11. What is probably the greatest threat to the success of any marriage?

**The selfishness that is inside each of the two people. The bible tells us we are to die daily to the old nature. That old nature is going to rear itself again and again in marriage, but rarely does it announce who it really is. It is going to blame the other person for a problem that it itself may have created or contributed to in the process. It may show up as my needs are not being met and feel fully justified in its next course of action. What might be needed is simply forgiving the other person, and seeking ways to meet the other person’s need. Jesus did say if we lose our lives, then we will find them.**

12. What suggestions would you give to couples who want to continually improve their marriage?

Be a part of a Christian marriage support group.

**Life-Sharing Lesson 3 “Can Divorce Ever Be The Answer” Exodus 21:10-11,  
Deuteronomy 24:1, Matthew 19:1-10 1 Corinthians 7:10-16**

1. How was your life impacted by someone getting a divorce?

*Answers will vary from people. My brother’s divorce from his wife was the first time I felt a loss from a divorce.*

**Exodus 21:10-11 Today's New International Version (TNIV)<sup>10</sup> If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights. <sup>11</sup> If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.**

**Deuteronomy 24 <sup>1</sup> If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house,**

2. What do you think were the biblical reasons for getting a divorce in the Old Testament?

**In the two passages above, 1) we find that if a husband did not provide a wife with food, clothing, or sexual rights those were grounds for divorce. 2) we find that sexual unfaithfulness was another cause for divorce. The word indecent in the Hebrew language meant sexual immorality.**

**Matthew 19:1-10 Today's New International Version (TNIV) Matthew 19**

***Divorce<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. <sup>2</sup> Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. <sup>3</sup> Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” <sup>4</sup>***

***“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,<sup>[a]</sup><sup>5</sup> and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh<sup>[b]</sup>?<sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”***

***<sup>7</sup> “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”<sup>8</sup> Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.<sup>9</sup> I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”<sup>10</sup> The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”***

**One needs to remember that this whole story is not about divorce as much as it is a matter that the Pharisees were attempting to trap or to test Jesus. Their goal was to get Jesus in trouble. Both Jesus and the Pharisees knew of the passages in the Old Testament that clearly allowed for divorce. Those passages of abandonment and failure to take care of the person was not at issue. What was at issue was whether or not a person could be divorced for any and every reason. There were two schools of thought that centered on the passage in Deuteronomy 24:1 concerning the phrase if find some indecency (sexual unfaithfulness). Since the word some is in the passage, does that mean that there are other things he could find. One school said no, it only refers to sexual unfaithfulness. The other school said yes, that there are many other things the man could find that would be grounds for divorce. The Pharisees are asking Jesus which side of the debate is he on because they believe he will come down on the only sexual unfaithfulness side. King Herod, had recently got a for any cause divorce, and they were hoping to get Jesus to criticize the divorce like John the Baptist did. You may recall, Herodias had John’s head cut off for his criticism. Jesus is responding to the debate of the any cause issue. He is not saying people have to stay in abusive and neglectful marriages.**

**3. Why did God allow for divorce?**

**God allowed for divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts. He did not want to see people beaten, abused, misused and destroyed by the actions of another person.**

**4. Why is it that two people living for Christ would seek a divorce?**

**If both people are living for Christ, they probably are seeking a divorce because they have let other things have a higher priority in their lives than their relationship to each other. It's different if both people only claim to be living for Christ, because they may be seeking a divorce for a host of reasons that are not grounded in Scripture. Selfishness probably has a role to play in it somewhere. This question is assuming neither person has fallen into sin. Once sin enters the picture, one person is no longer living for Christ if the sin has become a repeating form of behavior.**

**1 Corinthians 7:10-16 Today's New International Version (TNIV) <sup>10</sup> To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. <sup>11</sup> But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.**

**<sup>12</sup> To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.**

**<sup>15</sup> But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. <sup>16</sup> How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?**

### **Commentary**

**To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.**<sup>NIV</sup>

Having spoken to the unmarried people in [7:8-9](#), Paul here turned his attention *to the married*. He explained to the Corinthian believers the Christian view of divorce, given as a *command*, not from Paul himself, but from *the Lord*, referring to Jesus Christ. Jesus had taught about divorce during his time on earth (see [Matthew 5:31-32](#); [19:3-9](#); [Mark 10:2-12](#); [Luke 16:18](#)), saying that married people were not meant to be divorced. While divorce was permitted as a concession, it was not God's plan for married people. Paul either had received this teaching by divine inspiration, or he may have heard it in one of his conversations with the disciples.

Paul explained, therefore, that *a wife must not separate from her husband*. Apparently it was possible in the Greco-Roman culture for a wife to leave her husband (in Jewish culture, divorce laws focused on the husband separating from his wife). If a woman has already separated from her husband, *she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband*. She does not have the option to marry another man. In the same way, the *husband must not divorce his wife*. Although Paul gave an exception in [7:15](#), the ideal remains.

**See Also:**

[Chart: What the Bible Says About Marriage](#)

**[7:12-13](#) Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a Christian man has a wife who is an unbeliever and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. And if a Christian woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him.**<sup>NLT</sup> Next, Paul turned his attention to *the rest of you*—the people who were married but felt "single" because their spouses were unbelievers. Undoubtedly, there were many such couples in the Corinthian church. About this particular situation, Paul said he did *not have a direct command from the Lord*. So he did what all believers must do when Scripture doesn't state exactly what must be done in a particular situation—he inferred what should be done from what Scripture *does* say. Scripture has plenty to say about marriage. The "command" about the permanence of marriage ([7:10](#)) comes from the Old Testament ([Genesis 2:24](#)) and from Jesus (as noted above). Paul based his advice on God's commands about marriage and applied them to the situation the Corinthians were facing.

Because of their desire to serve Christ, some people in the Corinthian church thought they ought to divorce their pagan spouses and marry Christians. But Paul affirmed the marriage commitment. God's ideal is for marriages to stay together—even when one spouse is not a believer. To leave the marriage—even for the noblest of goals in serving the Lord—would actually be to disobey God's express command regarding marriage ([Mark 10:2-9](#)). Instead, the believing spouse should try to win the other to Christ ([7:16](#)). It would be easy to rationalize leaving; however, Paul makes a strong case for staying with the unbelieving spouse and being a positive influence on the marriage. Paul, like Jesus, believed that marriage is permanent. Paul commanded this for the believers in the church whose unbelieving spouses were *willing to continue living with* them. He gave other advice to those whose unbelieving spouses wanted to dissolve the marriage *because* the husband or wife had become a Christian (see [7:15](#)).

**[7:14](#) For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.**<sup>NIV</sup> The church included individuals who had become believers but whose spouses had not. Paul had already stated that these believers must remain with their unbelieving wife or husband. He explained that the unbelieving spouse *has been sanctified* by the believing spouse. The word "sanctify" can mean to cleanse, make pure, regard as sacred. It is used in the Old Testament to describe the items that become holy because of their relationship to something already deemed holy by God. For example, the temple sanctified the gold connected with it, or the altar sanctified the gift laid on it (see [Matthew 23:17, 19](#)). There are two views of how "sanctified" is applied to the unbeliever. One view is that there is a moral influence on the unbeliever as the Christian spouse bears witness to Christ and lives obediently to God. The other view is that the Christian, now blessed by God, includes his or her spouse in the promised blessings of the covenant as they overflow to the unbeliever. "Sanctification" does not carry the meaning of "salvation"; that is, the unbelieving husband is not "saved" through his wife's salvation. That would make no sense because of Paul's words in [7:16](#) about the desired conversion of these pagan partners. More likely, the Corinthians had heeded Paul's advice in [5:9-11](#) not to associate with unbelievers. They had interpreted Paul to mean that sex with an unbelieving marriage partner would defile them. Paul affirmed the opposite. When believers have sexual relations with their unbelieving spouse, the unbelievers are blessed in a certain way. The marriage and its sexual relations set up or lead into the possibility of the conversion of the unbeliever.

In this context, Paul pictured the unbelieving husband or wife, although remaining pagan, would assume "sanctification" in the eyes of God because of his or her intimate relationship with a believer. An unbelieving husband, as guardian and caretaker of a home and of his Christian wife, is sanctified by God due to the man's role in the life of one of God's chosen ones. The same is true of the wife.

The blessings that flow to believers don't stop there but extend to others. Among those most likely to receive benefits from God's work in believers' lives are their spouse and children. God regards the marriage as "sanctified" (set apart for his use) by the presence of one Christian spouse. The other partner does not receive salvation automatically but is helped by this relationship. The unbeliever is in a relationship with one upon whom God has his hand and whom God will use for his service. This will have an effect because of the close relationship and love between the partners that presumably already exist.

Paul calls the children of such a marriage *holy* because of God's blessing on the family. Many feel that the blessing given to the Christian parent extends to the children (though this is not expressly stated in Scripture), and they are to be regarded as Christian until they are old enough to decide for themselves. "Holy" here means dedicated to God by the believing parent. But the believing parent, called upon to raise his or her children in the faith, will hopefully have such an influence that the children will accept salvation for themselves.

**7:15** But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.<sup>NIV</sup> While the believing spouse must not leave the marriage if the unbeliever wants to stay married (7:12-13), the opposite may also happen. The unbeliever may decide that, because his or her spouse has become a Christian, the marriage should be dissolved. In this case, the believer's only choices would be to deny faith in Jesus Christ in order to maintain the marriage, or maintain faith in Christ and let the marriage be dissolved. As difficult as it might be, and as much as marriage is sanctified by God, the high calling of God must not be denied for any reason. So the believer must let the unbeliever go. When a divorce happens for this reason, *a believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances* to God's law regarding divorce. This may be the second exception to remarriage, along with adultery (see [Matthew 5:31-32](#)). So the Christian man or woman can allow the divorce to happen and not be disobeying God. Another reason to not block this divorce is that *God has called us to live in peace*—a situation that would be impossible in a home where the unbeliever felt hostile toward the believer. It would be better for such a marriage to be dissolved.

**7:16** You wives must remember that your husbands might be converted because of you. And you husbands must remember that your wives might be converted because of you.<sup>NLT</sup> Another reason for believers to try not to dissolve their marriage to an unbeliever is that they can be a good influence on their spouse. The intimacy and day-to-day-ness of marriage provide ample opportunity for the Christian to be a powerful witness to his or her spouse. So powerful can it be, Paul reminded them, that the unbelieving wife or husband *might be converted* because of the faithful testimony of the believing wives and husbands. For those couples who can stay together "in peace" (7:15), this would be the most joyous result of all.

5. What are the consequences for two people who are both serving the Lord if they separate from each other?

**Those two individuals are to remain unmarried or else be reconciled to each other. Again this situation applies when both people are living for the Lord. Christians are not supposed to be dumping one Christian in order to marry another Christian. Marriage is highly esteemed in the bible because it is to be an example of Jesus' relationship to the church. Two people in Christ who have committed themselves in marriage, should be willing to humble themselves before God and each other to work out the differences they have. If they choose not to do so, they are not allowed to go and find somebody else.**

6. What do you say to the person who comes to tell you, "I found out my spouse has committed adultery and I want out of this marriage?"

**You should allow the person to share their pain and anguish and encourage them to wait before making such a decision. If their spouse stumbled once and fell, that does not mean the person was seeking to end the relationship. Help the person to see how the choice to end a marriage will affect the person, the person's family, the person's church and the person's status. Divorce should never be considered lightly because it is far more painful and for more expensive than people ever thought it would be. Encourage the person to give themselves some time and some space. Encourage the person to go to counseling with his/her spouse to try and save their marriage. It can be easier and healthier to heal a marriage, than to discard it and try starting over with someone else. A shared history is a very important asset to hold on to, especially if it had its share of good times.**

7. What do you think the passage means when it says if an unbeliever leaves, the person is free to marry someone else?

**If an unbeliever does not want to be married to a believer because of the believer's faith and the unbeliever leaves, then the believer is free to remarry someone else. There is not the same call for reconciliation as when both people are believers.**

8. What would you tell a person who is in an abusive situation if the person told you, "I'm believing that God is going to save my spouse?"

**You should tell the person, God is not being glorified by you being abused. You need to get yourself to a safe situation. God has not promised us that our spouse will be saved in a given period of time. The person may not get saved until after our death if at all. Let them know God has given us wisdom to protect ourselves from unnecessary harm.**

9. Why do you think Christian couples in the church are so reluctant to participate in Marriage Sensation?

**Many people are afraid to admit they have problems when everyone has problems. Some couples do not want others to know any of their business or they fear that somehow they will be exposed. Pride has many people thinking they know how to have a good marriage without anybody's help. Some people do not understand the value of what Marriage Sensation can do for you regardless of whether your marriage is bad, poor, good, or great. Someone has a solution for a situation that you have not thought of.**

10. Do you think our society adequately prepares people for the reality of marriage? Why or Why not?

**No. Our society glorifies dating and the wedding date, but does little to prepare people for the life that is yet to follow. Most people have not seen a really good marriage up close, but they think they are prepared to have a great one simply because they were in love. They have no idea how much their sinful nature is going to work against them having a successful marriage. They do not think they need anyone to teach them to become great at marriage. How foolish. We all know to be a great athlete, a great singer, a great nurse or anything else means getting some formal training. Some training in marriage is better than none at all.**

11. Why do people think they will automatically know how to build a good marriage?

**Because they knew how to fall in love. They confuse “chemistry” with “living in a relationship.” Chemistry comes easily, learning to work and adjust to another person does not come easily.**

12. What advice would you give to someone who says, “I think I married the wrong person. I know God does not want me to be unhappy. I want a divorce.”

**Ask them what would the right person look like. Ask what would the right person be looking for in them. Ask what could they have done differently in the marriage. Ask them what does God want from them in the relationship. Ask them why do they believe God does not want them to be unhappy. God uses all kinds of circumstances to mold us and to shape us. Ask them why God would want them to end their marriage? Ask How does ending their marriage bring glory to God.**

13. What's the best way to help your friends who are thinking about getting divorce?

Get them to join a group like Marriage Sensation, get them to go to counseling, and get them to talk to the right people about the problems they are going through.

## Life-Sharing Lesson 4 “Choosing To Be Single” 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, 32-35

1. Who is a single person who has had a powerful impact on your life and why?

**One of my best friends in college was Douglas Miller. He impacted me by the gentle spirit he had about himself even though he was about 6ft 5. He would pray for me at the drop of a hat and would hold me accountable for the decisions that I made. He probably has no idea of how much an influence he has had on my life.**

2. Name three people in the bible who were single and used by God?

**Daniel appears to be single. Paul was single . Mary and Martha appear to be single. Jeremiah was single. Jesus was single. John the Baptist appears to be single. I use the word appear to be single because there is no mention of the person having a wife.**

3. Why has there been such a pressure to get married in our society, especially for women?

**The plan for the American culture has been to grow up and start a family of your own. Since Christianity was at the root of the culture, getting married was the process for starting a family. Single women were viewed as threats to marriages, especially if the single woman had previously been divorced. Marriage was also suppose to calm down men who were reckless and irresponsible as though marriage itself would cause the men to settle down and grow up. Marriage was a way to help contain sexual immorality.**

4. What are some of the advantages of being single in life?

A single person has more options available to them for making career changes, spending money, relocating at short notices, and setting their own schedule. They can

choose the rules in their home/apt and change them at will without the input of another person. They can terminate relationships with less complications, and they have more choices with spending their free time.

### **1 Corinthians 7:32-35 Today's New International Version (TNIV)**

<sup>32</sup> I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. <sup>35</sup> I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

Commentary

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT SINGLENESS / [7:25-40](#)**

Throughout this chapter, Paul has been telling believers not to seek to change their situations but to remain where they are and to seek to serve the Lord there. A person should not make drastic changes during difficult times. Paul wanted the believers to focus on making the most of their time before Christ returns—sharing the faith so that many more can become believers. Paul's urgency and single-minded focus on God's kingdom come through in the advice he gives to married and single people in these verses. As always, he did not want anything to hinder their work for the advance of God's kingdom.

**[7:25-26](#)** Now, about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in his kindness has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you. Because of this present crisis, I think it is best to remain just as you are.<sup>NLT</sup> The words "now, about" indicate that at this point Paul began addressing another matter about which the Corinthian church had asked. In their culture, a young woman's parents usually would make the decision about whether or not their daughter would marry. So these parents had written wondering what decisions to make regarding their daughters—the *young women who are not yet married*.

Paul clearly stated that he had no specific *command from the Lord* for the believers on this subject; that is, he did not have a direct teaching from Jesus to draw from. This does not mean, however, that Paul's words here should be taken as any less inspired. Paul offered them this advice because he knew that *the*

***Lord in his kindness [had] given [him] wisdom that can be trusted. Paul shared that wisdom with the believers when they asked such questions as this.***

**Paul advised the young women to *remain* as they were, unmarried. He reasoned that it would be easier on them to be single than married during *this present crisis*. There has been discussion among scholars regarding the nature of this "crisis." Some have suggested that Paul expected the Lord's return and was referring to the certain calamities that would take place prior to the Second Coming. Most likely, however, Paul foresaw the impending persecution that the Roman government would soon bring upon Christians. He gave this practical advice because being unmarried would mean less suffering and more freedom to throw one's life into the cause of Christ ([7:29](#)), even to the point of fearlessly dying for him. Paul's advice reveals his single-minded devotion to spreading the Good News. He wanted these unmarried believers to consider the times in which they were living and how well they could follow the will of God for them in their unmarried state as compared to being married.**

**[7:27](#) Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife.<sup>NIV</sup> Speaking to the young women not yet married, Paul had explained that "it is best to remain just as you are." This means that it would be best for them not to put their energies into worrying about getting married. Paul expanded his advice for everyone, both men and women, married and single. A *married* person should *not seek a divorce*; an *unmarried* man should not *look for a wife*. Paul's reasoning rested with what he had said in [7:26](#). It would be difficult to be a Christian in the Roman Empire in coming days. Paul was advising church members to stay focused on the Lord and on the business of sharing the gospel.**

**[7:28](#) But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married, it is not a sin. However, I am trying to spare you the extra problems that come with marriage.<sup>NLT</sup> Lest he be misunderstood, Paul explained that he was not saying that it would be sinful for these young unmarried women to get married. That would be inconsistent with all of Scripture. Instead, Paul was *trying to spare [them] the extra problems that come with marriage*. Life holds plenty of difficulties—and in the first-century Roman world, one of those difficulties would be persecution of Christians. Paul wanted the believers in Corinth to be able to let go of everything in their faithfulness to God—that would be much easier without the attachment of marriage. Thus, he advised the unmarried to remain that way. If they chose to marry, however, that would not be wrong.**

---

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

---

## MARITAL LIMITATIONS

Many people naively think that marriage will solve all their problems.

Here are some problems marriage *won't* solve:

I Loneliness

I Sexual temptation

I Satisfaction of one's deepest emotional needs

I Elimination of life's difficulties

Marriage alone does not hold two people together, but commitment does—commitment to Christ and to each other despite conflicts and problems. As wonderful as it is, marriage does not automatically solve every problem. Whether married or single, be content with your situation and focus on Christ, not on loved ones, to help address your problems.

---

**7:29-30** Now let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short, so husbands should not let marriage be their major concern. Happiness or sadness or wealth should not keep anyone from doing God's work.<sup>NLT</sup> As Paul had challenged the unmarried to consider their situation in light of the call of God on their lives and their brief time on earth to accomplish it, so he challenged all the brothers and sisters to look at life and realize that *the time that remains is very short*. Paul probably did not have the Second Coming in mind here; rather, he probably was thinking of coming persecutions and the resulting curtailment of the believers' freedom to witness for their faith. Paul urged the believers not to regard marriage, home, or financial security as the ultimate goals of life. As much as possible, they should live unhindered by the cares of this world, not getting involved with burdensome mortgages, budgets, investments, or debts that might keep them from doing God's work. Married men and women, as Paul pointed out (**7:33-34**), must take care of earthly responsibilities—but they should make every effort to keep them modest and manageable. They must live for the Lord in their marriages. If life brings them *happiness or sadness or wealth*, they should not be bound up in any of it; these situations must *not keep [them] from doing God's work*.

Paul's focus, as always, was that believers make the most of their time before Christ's return. Every person in every generation should have this sense of urgency about telling the Good News to others. Life is short—there's not much time!

**7:31** Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away.<sup>NLT</sup> Believers must live detached from this world. Those who have been blessed with *the things of the world should make good use of them without*

*becoming attached to them.* Material blessings can be used to further God's kingdom. Jesus commended the unbelievers in his day who used money wisely, and he encouraged the disciples to learn from them: "I tell you, use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. In this way, your generosity stores up a reward for you in heaven" ([Luke 16:9](#) NLT). All of our possessions and opportunities can be shared with those in ministry or put to good use. Our homes can be opened, our cars loaned out, and our possessions shared. Believers who have been blessed with material wealth must always remember that they have been blessed in order to bless others. Paul did not want the believers to be "attached" to anything in this life as if that were all there is—to do so would be to forget that *this world and all it contains will pass away* (see also [1 John 2:8, 17](#)).

[7:32-34](#) In everything you do, I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. But a married man can't do that so well. He has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be more devoted to the Lord in body and in spirit, while the married woman must be concerned about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband.<sup>NLT</sup> Marriage is a tremendous responsibility for each of the spouses involved. For a marriage to be successful, husband and wife must work at their relationship—they will both have to be concerned about *earthly responsibilities* and about *how to please* each other. This is good and important for those who are married. Paul was not saying that this was wrong in any way; he was simply pointing out that unmarried people can focus their energies elsewhere. For example, *an unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him*, and an unmarried woman *can be more devoted to the Lord in body and in spirit*. As Paul had noted in [7:28](#), his advice rests on his desire that these believers *be free from the concerns of this life*. Later, Paul would uphold the privilege of marriage ([9:3-5](#)), but this was his advice to those who had asked about their personal situations.

---

## LIFE APPLICATION

### THE GIFT OF SINGLENESS

Some single people feel tremendous pressure to be married. They think their lives can be complete with a spouse. But Paul underlines one advantage of being single—the potential of a greater focus on Christ and

---

his work. If you are unmarried, use your special opportunity to serve Christ wholeheartedly.

---

**7:35** I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord.<sup>NRSV</sup> Paul gave the advice in the previous verses for their *benefit*, but *not to put any restraint* upon the believers. These were not regulations that the churches had to follow. Instead, this advice came from Paul's heart, to help the struggling believers in Corinth to be able *to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord*. This would be helpful as they lived their Christianity in the midst of the gross immorality of Corinth and as they anticipated persecution for their faith.

**Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Corinthians.**

5. What are some of the advantages of being single as a Christian?

*Single Christians are freer when it comes to serving the Lord. They have all the advantages of the single person in question 4. A single person has more options available to them for making career changes, spending money, relocating at short notices, and setting their own schedule. They can choose the rules in their home/apt and change them at will without the input of another person. They can terminate relationships with less complications, and they have more choices with spending their free time. A single person can establish fasts on their own, go on mission trips, volunteer more often for service, and have more time for study and ministry opportunities without having to take a spouse's feelings into account.*

**1 Corinthians 7:1-9 Today's New International Version (TNIV) 1 Corinthians 7**

***<sup>1</sup> Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."<sup>2</sup> But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.<sup>3</sup> The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.<sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.<sup>5</sup> Do not deprive each other***

*except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. <sup>6</sup> I say this as a concession, not as a command. <sup>7</sup> I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. <sup>8</sup> Now to the unmarried<sup>[a]</sup> and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. <sup>9</sup> But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

6. What does Paul mean by calling being single a gift?

**There are some people who have the desire to devote themselves fully to the Lord without considering the possibility of marriage or getting romantically involved with someone else. People who have this ability are said to have the gift of singleness. Being single is a choice for this person so that he or she can further the kingdom of God.**

7. Why do you think the bible says for singles to either get married to control their sexual desires or avoid getting all worked up with desires in the first place?

**Every believer married or single is called to glorify God in his or her body. Our bodies do not belong to us but rather they belong to the Lord. We are not to choose to try to serve God and have sexual relationships outside of God's will. God is saying look, if you're going to put yourselves in tempting situations, then it is better for you to marry, otherwise you are destroying the very witness you claim to be proclaiming. If you do not want to get married, that's great, but commit yourself not to be involved in arousing your own or another person's sexual desires.**

8. If a person does not want to be single, what do you say to them if they say, "why won't God give me a spouse?"

**We don't know all the time why God does not bring a spouse into a person's life. Sometimes the person may be looking for a certain type of individual, and**

**overlooks others who would be very compatible to them. Our own stereotypes can keep us from considering some people as spouses. Our goal should be to constantly be preparing our own character, attitudes and qualities of love, so that if someone does cross our path, they will see an inner beauty within us that they would desire to be a part of. Some of us have personalities that are better suited for a person to remain single than to get married. We all need to know how to live productive lives as singles, because eventually all married couples will enter singleness again, unless both spouses are killed at the same time.**

9. If your son or daughter tells you, "I'm not going to have kids and I don't want to get married, because I'm giving my life to Christ," what should your response be.

**Well if that's what the Lord has for you, then I'll be supportive of you with God's plan and purpose for your life. ( We have to remember that none of us knows the future, and the person we are today, is not necessarily the person we will be tomorrow.)**

10. How can the church be more inclusive of singles?

**We can speak as positively about the single life as we do the married life. We can offer programs geared for singles in various stages of singlehood. One thing we have to understand is that there are many different kinds of singles. Singles never married, singles never married with kids, singles divorced, singles divorced with kids, singles widowed, singles who would like to be married, and singles who do not wish to marry. We are talking about a lot of differently situated people.**

11. How can singles enrich the life of the church?

**By using their gifts in areas where they can be effective. Everybody has something to offer. There has to be a willingness to offer it to the Lord.**

12. How do people in the church put unnecessary pressure on singles without thinking about it?

**By trying to play the matchmaking game. By asking the question, when are you going to get married. By assuming the person is actively looking for someone to date.**