

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: 1 Corinthians

Week of September 22 (Week 8)

1 Corinthians 7: Principles for Marriage



1 CORINTHIANS 7: SUMMARY

1 Corinthians 7 provides practical, Godly wisdom on the matters of marriage, singleness, divorce and remarriage. Paul encourages believers to steward their relationship status for the glory of God and to live in undivided devotion to Him. Whether single or married, every believer is called to live a life of faithfulness, self-control and holiness. This chapter offers a godly perspective on relationships that transcends culture, reaffirming that in every condition, our primary call is to live in obedience to God's commands. (Bible Hub, 1 Corinthians 7: Summary).

OBSERVING & APPLYING THE TEXT

In verse 1, Paul is probably quoting from what the Corinthian church “wrote about” in a letter to him. It seems some of them thought sex and marriage were somehow unspiritual and worldly, and not right for Christians who are looking forward to Jesus’ return.

Is Celibacy More Spiritual than Marriage? (7:1)

1. In 1 Cor. 7:1b Paul quotes from the letter that the Corinthians wrote to him regarding an issue. What is the issue that the Corinthians raised?

2. In response to the view of abstinence/celibacy that the Corinthians raised (v. 1b) Paul says: “But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each should have his own wife and each woman her own husband” (v. 2). What does it mean “to have his own wife/husband”?

Reflection: *On more than one possible "good": "Can more than one possible alternative for future action be good? Is it the case that only one path forward can please God, or may more than one please God? Does it matter how we respond to a chosen path? Are marriage, celibacy, and celibate singleness all "good"?* (Anthony Thiselton, *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical & Pastoral Commentary*, 106).

Why Get Married? (7:2, 5; see also Matt. 19:5-6)

3. What reasons does Paul give for getting married (v. 2-5)?

Reflection: "Contrary to the illusion that the meaning of life is found in sexual gratification, sexuality which is expressed in loving care of the partner, in contrast to the illusion, is magnificently creative. Its energies are directed towards work and homemaking and care of children and benefits which are felt far and wide in neighborhoods and society itself" (Paul Barnett, *1 Corinthians*, 112).

What About Divorce? (7:10-11, 13, 15; see also Matt. 19:4-6)

4. What is Paul's instruction on divorce in vv. 10-11?

5. What is Paul's instruction to an individual who has an unbelieving spouse in vv. 12-16?

Reflection: *On whether there are ever grounds for divorce:* "Separation and divorce are against God's will. But does Paul imply that separation could be a less harmful option for both parties than a sour, accusing relationship if "reconciliation" (v. 11) turns out to be completely unfeasible? (Thiselton, 107).

What About Circumcision? (7:18-19; see also 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Col. 2:11)

6. What is Paul's point in referring to circumcision (v. 19)? What is the overall message of verses 17-24?

Reflection: "So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God" (7:24). Regardless of what your situation may be, even if you cannot change it, even if it is a so-called "difficult" marriage, remember that God is able to meet you right where you are and to fill your life with love and joy and peace despite the struggles.

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

September 23-27, 2024

Read 1 Corinthians 7

Monday: 7:2-5 *"But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time ... so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."* Watch and pray for self-control over sexual immorality because Satan uses the God-given desire to tempt and lead us to immorality.

Tuesday: 7:12-14 *"if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband"* Pray for the individual who lives with an unbelieving spouse to have godly influence upon their spouse and lead them to Christ.

Wednesday: 7:19 *"For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision but keeping the commandments of God."* Paul's point isn't really about circumcision but an analogy to say that married is nothing and unmarried is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Reflect on how we can best obey and serve God and glorify Him with our singleness or married status.

Thursday: 7:23 *"You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men."* How do you become slaves of men? Well, you do when you conform to the world around and when you let the opinions of the secular writers shape your judgments as to what you ought to be in marriage, or whether you ought to get a divorce or not. Pray that we do not put ourselves under the inappropriate control or influence of others.

Friday: 7: 32-35 *"I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about the worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided ... I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord."* Pray for those who are called to singleness or are single either by divorce or widowed to have an undivided devotion to the Lord.