

Intro: Today we are continuing our study in 1 Corinthians 7 which deals with Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage.

1. Last week we looked at sexuality inside and outside of marriage and what God's standards and expectations are.
2. This week our study will focus mainly on divorce.

Quick reminder of the three things you must consider when looking at these verses:

1. Paul is responding to questions from a letter he received from the Christians in Corinth.
2. Paul's responses are in context of the situation at Corinth (a very immoral society).
3. This passage is not a full exposition on marriage, divorce, and remarriage.
  - a. The full counsel of God must be taken into consideration when considering these topics.

### **Read 1 Cor 7:10-16 and Pray<sup>1</sup>**

1. Who here has been divorced, or your parents, a sibling or really close friend has gone through a divorce?
  - a. My parents divorced when I was 3 years old so this is a topic that hits close to home for me.
2. Maybe you haven't seen divorce occur within your immediate family or friends, but if you follow secular news, no doubt you've heard of Sandra Bullock or other celebrities that have filed for divorce.
3. When using an internet search engine to find info on divorce, the following sponsored ads display at the top of the page:
  - a. '*Quick Divorce – 2 Weeks*' at [guamdivorce.com](http://guamdivorce.com) and '*Divorce Advice for Women*' at [preparefordivorce.com](http://preparefordivorce.com)
4. Then there's websites like [easy-divorce.com](http://easy-divorce.com), [reliabledivorce.com](http://reliabledivorce.com), and [quickdivorce.org](http://quickdivorce.org)
  - a. Divorces today have become common, quick, and easy.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise marked, all scriptures taken from the New King James Version. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

5. Here are some of the reasons for divorce according to a secular source:

- a. Lack of commitment to the marriage
- b. Lack of communication between spouses
- c. Infidelity
- d. Abandonment
- e. Alcohol Addiction
- f. Substance Abuse
- g. Physical Abuse
- h. Sexual Abuse
- i. Emotional Abuse
- j. Inability to manage or resolve conflict
- k. Personality Differences or 'irreconcilable differences'
- l. Differences in personal and career goals
- m. Financial problems
- n. Different expectations about household tasks
- o. Different expectations about having or rearing children
- p. Interference from parents or in-laws
- q. Lack of maturity
- r. Intellectual Incompatibility
- s. Sexual Incompatibility
- t. Insistence of sticking to traditional roles and not allowing room for personal growth
- u. Falling out of love

What does God's Word say concerning Divorce?

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 <sup>10</sup> Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband. <sup>11</sup> But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife.

1. Here Paul is issuing an authoritative command; actually he's just repeating the Lord's command concerning divorce.
  - a. Paul makes this statement based on what Jesus taught in Matthew 19.
2. READ Matthew 19:1-6
  - a. What we find in these verses is marriage as God intended it.
  - b. It's being married for life. How appropriate that our couples ministry would be called "Married for LIFE" right?

- c. Two people have become one flesh. Like the two pieces of play-dough that I stuck together last week, they are now one.
  - d. But note that it is God who has brought them together for it was God who ordained marriage in the first place.
  - e. Since God has brought these two people together through marriage, Jesus says, “*Let not man separate.*”
3. Back to Matthew 19, the Pharisees were not satisfied with Jesus’s response.
- a. Let’s look at Matthew 19:7-9.
  - b. Here we see the first circumstance that would allow for a divorce to be permissible. What is it? Adultery.
4. When adultery occurs, the innocent party may seek a divorce and subsequently remarry for they have been released from that marriage because of the transgression that was committed.
- a. But, the act of adultery does not necessitate divorce.
  - b. Even when adultery is committed, a couple can, through God’s grace, learn to forgive and begin rebuilding their marriage.
  - c. God has forgiven us of so much more. Surely we can follow His example and even forgive the sin of adultery.
  - d. I would recommend and encourage that a couple try to reconcile and repair their relationship before they file for divorce.
  - e. But because the sin of adultery is so damaging to a relationship *and* the trust that a couple shares that the Lord allows for a married couple to divorce and subsequently get remarried in the event adultery occurs.
5. Now back to 1 Cor 7:10, Paul is not speaking of all married couples when he says “**Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband.**”
- a. He is specifically speaking of marriages where *both* husband and wife are believers. Why do I say that?
  - b. Because verses 12 and 13 deal separately with marriages where only one spouse is a believer.

- c. So if adultery has not been committed, then a couple is to remain together.
6. But, if a *Christian* couple were to separate for reasons other adultery, verse 11 says, “let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife”
- a. Don’t get hung-up on the gender references, they are interchangeable.
  - b. There are some circumstances where it is permissible and even advisable for a couple to separate from one another; not divorce, just separate.
  - c. Domestic violence for example. If a spouse has become a punching bag, action needs to be taken to protect that person which likely includes separating them.
  - d. Alcohol and drugs are other things which are especially dangerous and could possibly warrant a separation for the safety of the other spouse and/or children.
7. Now again, we are talking about a marriage involving two believers.
- a. If your issue is not related to adultery, Christian couples are not to divorce.
  - b. If separation occurs, then they are to “remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband”
  - c. That seems so rigid, Why?
  - d. Malachi 2:15–16 (NLT) <sup>15</sup> *Didn’t the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are [H]is. And what does [H]e want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth.*<sup>16</sup> *“For I hate divorce!” says the Lord, the God of Israel. “To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.”*
  - e. God is serious about marriage we should be as well.
    - i. Sonya and I won’t even joke about it!
8. If during a period of separation, if one spouse divorces the other; I believe the command here still applies, you remain unmarried or you reconcile.
- a. I have seen divorced couple, by the grace of God, reconcile and remarry.

- b. But if after the divorce one ex-spouse remarries, then “adultery” has occurred and the innocent party has been abandoned and is free from all ties to that previous marriage and may remarry as the Lord leads.

9. Keep in mind, when ever separation takes place, the key is to keep our hope in Christ!

- a. Trust in Christ and look to Him to help reconcile and repair the relationship.

1 Corinthians 7:12-13 <sup>12</sup> **But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.** <sup>13</sup> **And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.**

1. Now Paul is sharing his own thoughts, he is no longer quoting Jesus.

- a. But does this mean he lacks authority, or that we can disregard Paul’s words because they are not from the Lord?

- b. Please note verse 40 in which Paul says, “**I think I also have the Spirit of God**” and obviously he did as it is found here in our bibles, part of the ‘*Word of God*’.

2. Paul now says, “**But to the rest**”; who is that?

- a. We have already addressed the single saint.

- i. It’s good if a man or woman remains single that they might serve the Lord without distraction.

- ii. But that’s a special gift from God to remain single and not everyone has that gift.

- b. We’ll discuss widows later in this chapter.

- c. Concerning *Christian* married couples, they should remain married unless there is an instance of adultery.

- i. Remember, adultery does not necessitate divorce, it only permits it.

3. So when Paul says, “**But to the rest**” he is focusing on marriages where only one spouse is a believer.

- a. This is one of the most difficult and often heart wrenching situations for a believer to be in.

4. Sadly I've seen that this particular issue can do one or more of three things. This is not all inclusive...
  - a. The believing spouse simply stops going to church because going to church creates too much tension and conflict between the couple.
    - i. For example: The unbelieving spouse doesn't want "religion" forced on the kids; he/she want the kids to be able to decide for themselves.
  - b. The believing spouse goes to church by themselves, but fights with the unbelieving spouse over their church attendance.
    - i. They say, "*What's wrong with you? Why won't you go to church with me? What, do you hate God, or do you hate me?*"
    - ii. Their church attendance only causes fights and frustration.
  - c. The believing spouse comes to church by themselves, but they are grieved and they carry a heavy burden knowing that their spouse is not saved and that they are headed for hell if they don't repent.
5. So the command from the Holy Spirit through Paul is **"If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him."**

There are two reasons why couples in this situation are commanded to remain together ...

The 1<sup>st</sup> reason is found in 1 Corinthians 7:14 **<sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.**

1. If there is one believer within the couple, it says that the other is "sanctified".
  - a. This does NOT mean that the unbelieving spouse will be saved because of the believing spouse.
  - b. To be saved, you must confess your own sins, repent and believe on the Lord Jesus as your Savior.
2. The word sanctified means "set apart", meaning that the believer's presence sets that family apart.

- a. Otherwise that family would be entirely and totally separated from God and void of all His blessings, provisions, and protection.
3. I believe that the implication here is best exemplified in Jacob, when he lived with his father-in-law Laban.
  - a. Even though Laban was a dishonest idol worshipper, God blessed his household while Jacob was there.
  - b. Likewise, God blessed both Potiphar and Pharaoh while Joseph was in their presence.
4. Without a believing parent, “**your children would be unclean, but now they are holy**” Paul says.
  - a. The original Greek word for “**unclean**” speaks of a ceremonial defilement or of being ritually unaccepted; it does not speak of a physical or moral impurity which is a different Greek word.
5. This leads me to an important question, “*What happens when a baby or a child dies?*”
  - a. First, let me say that the scriptures do not *explicitly* answer this question.
  - b. But there is however, plenty of evidence to support what is commonly referred to as “*the age of accountability*” concerning infant and childhood salvation.
  - c. “*The age of accountability*” is the belief that babies and children who die before they possess the mental capacity to make a decision for Christ will be taken to heaven.
  - d. The first example of this is found in Numbers (chap 14) and Deuteronomy.
    - i. All of the adults 20 years old and older, except Caleb and Joshua were guilty of not entering the Promised Land by faith.
    - ii. The Lord told Moses, “*But your little ones... I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.*”
  - e. When King David’s illegitimate baby boy from his adulterous relationship died, David stopped mourning and said, “*I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*”

6. In Luke 18:15–17, Jesus said, <sup>15</sup> *Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.* <sup>16</sup> *But Jesus called them to Him and said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.* <sup>17</sup> *Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”*
- a. We know that many of the people that followed Jesus did not believe in Him.
  - b. They were simply looking for a physical healing or a free handout.
    - i. They following Him for His blessings, not out of belief.
  - c. Yet Jesus did not say, *“Bring to Me only the children of the true believers.”*
  - d. He did not say, *“Only allow the children whose parents are faithful followers.”*
  - e. No, He simply said, *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God”*
7. What then is the age of accountability? We are not sure. In the Old Testament it was set at 20 years old and above, but really, we are not sure.
- a. Even though I am not sure of the specific age of accountability...
  - b. I do firmly believe that all miscarriages, of which Sonya and I have suffered two, all infant deaths, all child deaths result in that child going to live with the Lord forever in eternity.
8. I also know, based on verse 14 that the believing spouse sanctifies their family bringing that family into the loving eye and watchful care of the Lord.
- a. If you are here today and your spouse is not a believer, take comfort in knowing that God is with you.
  - b. Stay faithful! Keep praying, keep persevering.

Now let’s look at verse 16 for the second reason a believing spouse is to remain with their unbelieving partner: <sup>16</sup> **For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save *your* husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save *your* wife?**

1. I summarize this verse with 3 words: Stay, Pray, and Obey.

- a. You stay with them – Don't give up or throw in the towel.
  - b. You pray for them – This is the most powerful thing you can do!
    - i. Don't pick at them, pray for them.
  - c. And you obey God's word, and if you are a wife, you obey your husband as well so long as he doesn't ask you to sin or forsake your God.
2. 1 Peter 3:1–2 <sup>1</sup> *Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,* <sup>2</sup> *when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.*
  3. Both men and women are to be a light to them, that they might see Jesus in your actions.

Verse 15 includes one more exception that makes divorce permissible...

1 Corinthians 7:15 <sup>15</sup> **But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.**

1. When you have done all that you can and without you prompting or suggesting, the unbelieving spouse leaves you, then you are free.
  - a. That doesn't mean you try to get them to leave.
2. If the unbelieving spouse leaves, then Paul says that you are no long under bondage.
  - a. The original Greek word for **bondage** is a strong word for being enslaved or firmly bound by an obligation.
  - b. Paul is saying that under this circumstance, that if a believing spouse is **abandoned** by the unbelieving spouse, then they are free from that obligation.
  - c. Free to divorce and even to remarry in the Lord if the Lord so led.

### **How can we apply this passage?**

1. First of all, we should not condone martial engagements between a believer and non-believer.

- a. 2 Corinthians 6:14 <sup>14</sup> *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*
  - b. Believers should not marry a non-believer.
    - i. As a pastor, I will not perform a marriage ceremony for a couple if both are not Christians.
    - ii. If I did, I would be sending the wrong message to that couple and to all who would be watching.
  - c. We guard ourselves against divorce by protecting the relationship from the beginning. A Christian should only marry another Christian.
2. In all cases, we seek to preserve what God has ordained.
3. When an evil or damaging act has been committed, we seek to repair the relationship through reconciliation and restoration.
- a. We should be quick to seek reconciliation and restoration in all matters.
  - b. My marriage counseling experiences:
    - i. One or both have neglected God's word and their walk with the Lord.
  - c. You need to pray together; it's been said that families that pray together stay together.
  - d. Seek help from a TRUSTED Christian source. BIBLICAL Counseling.
    - i. This could be from a chaplain, pastor, church leader or mature Christian friend.
    - ii. Don't accept advice without a scriptural basis.
  - e. But if reconciliation and restoration cannot be achieved in matters related to adultery and abandonment, then in accordance with God's words we release the offending adulterer or departing unbeliever.
4. Most importantly: We must NEVER forget what is eternally at stake. The salvation of others.

- a. Not only an unbelieving spouse, but the children, close family members & friends who are watching.
- b. Are our actions honoring the institution God ordained and is it helping to lead people to Christ?
  - i. I hope so!