

Light Reading/Deep Reading of the Bible

1 Corinthians chapter 7

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Why Paul thinks in 1 Corinthians 7 is good to be single and unmarried

In 1 Corinthians 7:29–31, he says, "Brethren, I say to you, The time is shortened. From now on he who has a wife will be as if he did not have one; ... for the way the world is passing away." It reflects Paul's sense of urgency for the end times. Believing that the day of Jesus' return may not be far off, he encourages believers to focus on spiritual matters rather than focusing too much on worldly responsibilities (such as marriage or material pursuits). This eschatological outlook led Paul to believe that singles would be freer to serve God's kingdom during this short period of time. The general expectation of Jesus' return soon in the early church affected their priorities in life. In addition, the Corinthian church at the time faced various challenges, including moral turpitude and social pressures, and Paul may have thought that singleness would help believers avoid some worldly temptations and be more focused on their faith in a turbulent environment. He said that being single had its own unique "benefits", and Paul pointed out that at that time Corinthian society was full of difficulties (including food shortages, social unrest, etc.), and that being single would have made it easier for them to cope with changes in circumstances without dragging down their families. He said, "Because of the present difficulties, it seems to me that it is better for a man to be in peace." Paul believed that single people were able to serve God more singlely, without the distractions of the responsibilities of a partner and family. He said, "The unmarried are anxious about the things of the Lord, to please the Lord; But he who is married is to be attentive to the things of the world and to please his wife." Paul acknowledged that marriage was not a sin and did not consider marriage bad. But he bluntly said that marriage has a

physical body to suffer, such as friction between husband and wife, raising children, dealing with relatives and other issues, these are not single people need to face. He said, "If you take a wife, you are not sinning; If a virgin is married, it is not a sin. But such people will suffer in the flesh, but I want you to be spared this affliction." Paul stresses several times in chapter 7 that he is not commanding that everyone must be single, but rather that he makes personal choices based on each person's calling and circumstances. He stressed, "This is for your own good, not to bind you, but to set you free as you deserve...." ◻ °

First Corinthians 7 is an epistle written by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian church that teaches about marriage, celibacy, divorce, and related ethical issues. This chapter responds to specific questions raised by the Corinthian church, particularly questions about marriage and sexual relations. In this chapter, Paul attempts to balance personal freedom and spiritual pursuits with practical responsibilities, providing practical guidance while emphasizing the love of faith and obedience to God's will. Believers in the Corinthian Church may have been influenced by certain extreme ideas of the time, such as asceticism (the belief that marriage and sexuality were vulgar) or indulgence (ignoring moral restraint). Paul responds to their questions: 'As to what you have written about, I say that it is better for a man not to be near a woman' (7:1). Paul acknowledges the spiritual benefits of celibacy because it allows one to focus more on serving God. Paul proposes the principle that every person should be accepted for who he or she is called to be and serve God on that basis. He emphasized that outward status (such as circumcision or slavery) did not affect spiritual status, and that it was important to obey God's commands. This teaching encourages believers to be faithful in their present lives, rather than seeking to change their identity or status. Paul's advice to the unmarried, especially virgins and young people, emphasizes that this is his personal opinion and not a direct command of the Lord. Given the "urgency" of the time, he thought it would be better to remain celibate, as married people would be distracted by family responsibilities. But he also made it clear that marriage is not a sin and that it is appropriate for anyone to choose to marry. For widows, Paul advises that it would be better to be celibate, but that if they remarry, they should marry believers "in the Lord."

We pray

Dear Heavenly Father,

We are thankful for prayer for marriage and for family as a haven of love and support. Lord, pray to keep each of our families alive and that love, trust, and mutual respect will always be filled in our homes.

Lord, pray for personal intervention in every marriage relationship, to heal broken hearts and mend wounded relationships. Let husbands and wives be Christ-centered, obey and tolerate each other, learn unity in difficulties, and be grateful to each other in good times.

Lord, we also pray for the growth of the next generation, that parents will have wisdom and patience to teach their children, that children will grow up in truth and love, and that they will pray in fear and follow the path of prayer.

Prayer makes every family a witness to prayer, showing the peace and glory of prayer in this chaotic age.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

1 Corinthians 7

Amplified Bible

Teaching on Marriage

⁷ Now as to the matters of which you wrote: It is good (beneficial, advantageous) for a man not to touch a woman [outside marriage]. ² But because of [the temptation to participate in] sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ³ The husband must fulfill his [marital] duty to his wife [with good will and kindness], and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife does not have [exclusive] authority over her own body, but the husband *shares with her*; and likewise the husband does not have [exclusive] authority over his body, but the wife *shares with him*. ⁵ Do not deprive each other [of marital rights], except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, so that you may devote yourselves [unhindered] to prayer, but come together again so that Satan will not tempt you [to sin] because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ But I am saying this as a concession, not as a command. ⁷ I wish that all the people were as I am; but each person has his own gift from God, one of this kind and one of that.

⁸ But I say to the unmarried and to the widows, [that as a practical matter] it is good if they remain [single and entirely devoted to the Lord] ^[a]as I am. ⁹ But if they do not have [sufficient] self-control, they should marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.

¹⁰ But to the ^[b]married [believers] I give instructions—not I, but the Lord—that the wife is not to separate from her husband, ¹¹ (but even if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be ^[c]reconciled to her husband) and that the husband should not leave his wife.

¹² To the ^[d]rest I declare—I, not the Lord [since Jesus did not discuss this]—that if any [believing] brother has a wife who does not believe [in Christ], and she consents to live with him, he must not leave her. ¹³ And if any [believing] woman has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not leave him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is ^[e]sanctified [that is, he receives the blessings granted] through his [Christian] wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be [ceremonially] ^[f]unclean, but as it is they are holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbelieving partner leaves, let him leave. In such cases the [remaining] brother or sister is not [spiritually or morally] bound. But God has called us to ^[g]peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband [by leading him to Christ]? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife [by leading her to Christ]?

¹⁷ Only, let each one live the life which the Lord has assigned him, and to which God has called him [for each person is unique and is accountable for his choices and conduct, let him walk in this way]. This is the rule I make in all the churches. ¹⁸ Was anyone at the time of his calling

[from God already] circumcised? He is not to ^[h]become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called while uncircumcised? ^[i]He is not to be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters is* keeping the commandments of God. ²⁰ Each one should remain in the condition in which he was [when he was] called.

²¹ Were you a slave when you were called? Do not worry about that [since your status as a believer is ^[i]equal to that of a freeborn believer]; but if you are able to gain your freedom, ^[k]do that. ²² For he who was a slave when he was called in the Lord is a freedman of the Lord, likewise he who was free when he was called is a slave of Christ. ²³ You were bought with a price [a precious price paid by Christ]; do not become slaves to men [but to Christ]. ²⁴ Brothers, let each one remain with God in that *condition* in which he was [when he was] called.

²⁵ Now concerning the virgins [of marriageable age] I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶ I think then that because of the impending distress [that is, the pressure of the current trouble], it is good for a man to remain as he is. ²⁷ Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you ^[i]unmarried? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸ But if you do marry, you have not sinned [in doing so]; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned [in doing so]. Yet those [who marry] will have troubles (special challenges) in this life, and I am trying to spare you that. ²⁹ But I say this, believers: the ^[m]time has been shortened, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they did not; ³⁰ and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess [anything]; ³¹ and those who use the world [taking advantage of its opportunities], as though they did not make full use of it. For the outward form of this world [its present social and material nature] is passing away.

³² But I want you to be free from concern. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; ³³ but the married man is concerned about worldly things, how he may please his wife, ³⁴ and *his interests* are divided. The unmarried woman or the virgin is concerned about the matters of the Lord, how to be holy *and* set apart both in body and in spirit; but a married woman is concerned about worldly things, how she may please her husband. ³⁵ Now I say this for your own benefit; not to restrict you, but to promote what is appropriate and secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

³⁶ But if any man thinks that he is not acting properly *and* honorably toward his virgin *daughter*, [^[i]by not permitting her to marry], if she is ^[o]past her youth, and it must be so, let him do as he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry. ³⁷ But the man who stands firmly committed in his heart, having no compulsion [to yield to his daughter's request], and has authority over his own will, and has decided in his own heart to keep his own virgin [daughter from being married], he will do well. ³⁸ So then both the father who gives his virgin *daughter* in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

³⁹ A wife is bound [to her husband by law] as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wishes, only [provided that he too is] in the Lord. ⁴⁰ But in my opinion a widow is happier if she stays as she is. And I think that I also have the Spirit of God [in this matter].

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 is one of the most important passages in the New Testament concerning **marriage, singleness, sexual relations, and Christian life choices**. Written by the Apostle Paul, this chapter responds to specific questions the Corinthian church had sent to him. Below is a detailed breakdown of its content, followed by its **theological influence**.

Detailed Explanation of 1 Corinthians 7

Verses 1–7: Sexual Relations in Marriage

- Paul begins by addressing the Corinthians' statement: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."
- Paul affirms **marriage as a proper context** for sexual relations to avoid immorality.
- **Husbands and wives should not deprive each other**, except temporarily for prayer, and then reunite, so Satan does not tempt them.
- Paul acknowledges **celibacy as a gift from God** (as he himself is celibate), but recognizes not all have this gift.

Key point: Marriage is not inferior to singleness; each has its place, depending on one's calling and gift from God.

Verses 8–9: Advice to the Unmarried and Widows

- Paul encourages the **unmarried and widows** to remain single like him, **if they can**.
 - But if they struggle with self-control, **it is better to marry than to burn with passion**.
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Verses 10–16: Instructions on Divorce

- Paul emphasizes **Jesus' teaching** that **a wife should not separate from her husband**, and if she does, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled.
 - For **mixed marriages** (one spouse is a believer, the other is not), Paul says: stay married **if the unbelieving spouse is willing** to live with the believer.
 - If the unbeliever leaves, the believer is **"not bound"**—indicating freedom from marital obligation.
 - God's calling is for **peace**, and the believing spouse may **influence the salvation** of the unbelieving one.
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Verses 17–24: Live As You Are Called

- Paul teaches that **believers should remain in the situation they were in when God called them**, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free.
 - The point: **one’s status in society does not define their value in Christ**.
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✦ Verses 25–40: Advice to Virgins and the Betrothed

- Paul gives **opinion-based wisdom**, acknowledging it’s not a command from the Lord but from someone trustworthy.
 - He advises against marrying in times of “**present distress**”—possibly persecution or hardship.
 - Singleness allows more focus on pleasing the Lord, while married life requires **divided attention**.
 - Paul makes clear this is not to **forbid marriage**, but to **protect people from worldly troubles**.
 - **Widows are free to remarry**, but **only in the Lord** (i.e., to another believer).
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📖 Theological Influence of 1 Corinthians 7

1. Affirmation of Both Singleness and Marriage

- The chapter elevates **both marriage and celibacy** as valid, honorable states.
- This has shaped Christian theology by affirming that a person is complete in Christ, **regardless of marital status**.

2. Sexual Ethics and Christian Morality

- Paul’s teaching reinforced **sexual relations as exclusive to marriage**.
- His views have greatly influenced Christian teachings on **sexual morality, self-control, and fidelity**.

3. Covenantal View of Marriage

- Marriage is **not to be taken lightly**, and divorce is not encouraged.
- This has impacted church teachings on the **sanctity of marriage and discouragement of divorce**, especially among believers.

4. Redemptive Hope in Mixed Marriages

- Paul offers a **pastoral, redemptive approach** to believers married to unbelievers.

- Instead of commanding separation, he urges peace and **missional hope**—that the believer may lead the unbeliever to Christ.

5. Calling and Contentment

- A central theological point: **God calls people in various life circumstances**, and each status can glorify Him.
- This has helped Christians embrace their **vocation and situation as part of God's sovereign plan**.

6. Freedom in Christ

- Even those in servitude or social limitations are **equal in Christ**, showing early Christian **egalitarian values**.
 - It laid the groundwork for **liberation theology** and the Christian call for **justice and human dignity**.
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Prayer Reflection Based on 1 Corinthians 7

Lord, help us to honor You in our relationships, whether single or married. Give us wisdom, self-control, and peace. Teach us to see every calling—whether marriage, singleness, or ministry—as a holy path in serving You. Guide those in difficult marriages with grace, and lead us all into deeper devotion to Christ. Amen.