

First Corinthians 7:1-40

In 7:26 the “present crisis” may refer to the sexual immorality among the believers in Corinth.

Marriage is normal. Sex in marriage is an expectation.

7:1

“Now concerning” is “peri de” and is a formula used to introduce a new topic.

7:25 8:1 12:1 16:1 16:12

Paul is now going to address the things they wrote about.

Since the time of Origen (200’s AD) this first line “It is not good to touch a woman” was considered to be a Corinthian quote. This is what some of them were teaching.

“Not Marry” in the NIV is “touch” in the Greek and refers to sexual intercourse.

This is also seen in Gen. 20:6 and Prov. 6:29

Corinth was saying no sex in marriage because 7:2-4 explains and commands to have sex in marriage.

7:2

The verbs are Imperative which make them a command.

“Immorality” is plural or “immoralities” in the Greek referring to many acts.

In a society filled with temptations Paul says to marry.

“Should have” is imperative and so is a command. Anything other than having a wife is an exception (see 7:7)

Sex is not the only reason for marriage (also companionship, family, love, stability, purpose, etc.) but sex is the focus of these verses. Paul makes it clear that sex is one of the reasons for marriage.

7:3

Each partner has:

1. Rights – privileges of marriage
2. Dues – responsibilities in marriage

These rights and dues of marriage go both ways according to God’s word.

Even in a male dominated culture Paul says both the husband and the wife have rights and dues in marriage.

”Habitual duty” is the interpretation of the present imperative verb.

The focus of sex in these verses is the giving of oneself to your partner

7:4

“Exercise Authority” is a type of paradox since it first says “Her/His own body” then says she/he does “Not have authority” her/his own body.

Male and female are equal in sexual relationship. Men do not control sex within marriage nor do women. Both are to share responsibility.

Sex is indispensable in marriage according to the Word of God.
Sex is not an option but is expected and normal.
Sex is not bad nor is it spiritually defiling.
A person can have a prayer life and a sex life in a marriage relationship.
Paul is telling the Corinthians that this is part of the normal life.
Sex is not a non-spiritual activity.

7:5

“devote yourself” is σχολασητε and means “you may have leisure” for prayer.
Notice “mutual consent”. This means before a husband or a wife turns to a time of prayer and takes time away from sexual intercourse there should be mutual consent or agreement from the other partner.

“Do not Deprive” in the Greek indicates that depriving is occurring. The Greek says “Stop depriving”

7:6

“As a concession” cannot be Paul referring to the imperative verbs of 7:2-4 where he just finished saying you must be having sex in a married relationship.

The concession he makes is in 7:5.

Here he states his concession or his half way point for those who want to pray and not be interrupted with sex. Paul says that if both partners agree there can be a time set aside for prayer with no sexual relationship. The criteria are:

1. Both agree
2. Only for a set period of time

So if both do not agree to the time of prayer the other partner cannot say no to sex.

Also, it can only be for a set time. In other words one partner cannot devote themselves to prayer for the rest of their life and refrain from sex.

7:7

Jewish men were required to be married and have children
In the Talmud: “Any man who has no wife is no proper man”
Rabbis taught men should be married by age 20 or else upset God

Was Paul married before his conversion? Had his wife left him when he became a believer? Had his wife died? Had Paul always been single?

First Corinthians 7:17-24

Guiding Principle:

Live out your Christian life where you were at when God called you.

Stay where you are and do not think changing your circumstances will change you spiritually.

Mixed marriage is the topic but the theme becomes –

- 1) Living at peace (7:15) and
- 2) Staying where you are (7:17)

Point: Do not think you are more spiritual by changing your physical situation

So, 7:1 “Good not to marry (“touch”) was the Corinthian’s attempt to be more spiritual by changing their natural principles, laws and institutions.

In Christ your relationship with God is altered completely at the point of salvation or “calling”.

There is nothing more to do and nothing to improve your spiritual condition.

Leaving your wife (husband), your career, etc. will not make your spiritual experience better.

Instead, because of your relationship with God you have a transforming presence in your marriage, workplace, relationships, etc.

Paul will now illustrate this with two other examples:

- 1) Circumcision – here in Corinth it is a sociological issue and not a religious issue like in Galatia.
- 2) Slavery

These examples are used to support his statements concerning:

- 1) Sex in marriage
- 2) Marriage to a non-believer

The Point remains: Do not change these (sex, marriage) in an attempt to improve your spiritual life.

“καλεω” or “calling” is used 8x (the noun “κλησις” is used 1x)

“Calling” is used:

- 1) with each condition listed: circumcised, uncircumcised, slave, free
- 2) with the imperative “remain”

Outline of Paul’s argument:

- 1) The term “call” describes the born again experience.
- 2) The “call” came to people in any one of many social situations.
- 3) These two realities (saved as a member of the kingdom of God and a citizen with natural responsibilities and needs) overlap in a variety of issues and circumstances:
 - a. Since God calls people while they are in any and every social situation this proves that the social or natural situation is irrelevant
 - b. Since the social situation (marriage, Jew, slave, business man) is irrelevant at the time of the call it remains irrelevant after the call.
 - c. But, since these social situations are irrelevant then if change does occur (slave becomes free, career changes, etc.) then this change is also irrelevant in light of your spiritual condition.

7:17

“**Nevertheless**” refers back to verse 15 where an exception was made to marriage with the unbeliever leaving. “Nevertheless” then returns to Paul’s point that change in circumstances is not to be sought due to a person having become a Christian.

ει μη εκαστω ως μεμερικεν ο κυριος εκαστον
Only to each as has divided the Lord each

ως κεκληκεν ο θεος ουτως περιπατειτω
as has called God so let him walk

και ουτως εν ταις εκκλησιαις πασαις διατασσομαι.
And so in the churches all I command

“**Retain**” or “**Remain**” is imperative and so is a command. It is the word “περιπατειτω” and means “to make one’s way, to make progress, to make due use of ones opportunity, to regulate one’s life, to conduct one’s self”

This verse sets forth the basic principle:

“Live out your Christian life where you were at when God called you!

Gal. 3:28 states a similar principle: It does not matter if you are a Jew, Greek, male, female, slave or free. You are fine.

This same principle is restated at the end of this argument in 7:24:

“Each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.”

Paul’s concern is not that the people cannot change their position in life but that they not change it due to poor theology.

Paul is telling them that they can live out their natural lives without damaging their spiritual life.

It is proper to live out your natural life

Two areas they are to live their Christian life:

1. That **assigned** - It is the word “μεμερικεν” and means “to part, to apportion a share, to deal, to distribute, to give.
2. The one **called** to – It is the word “κεκληκεν” it is a reference to being called to partake in divine blessing of redemption or salvation.

7:18

7:19

An incredible statement by Paul the former Pharisee.

But Paul cannot let this be turned into a statement like “Obedience to God is nothing.”

7:20

“**Calling**” is κλησει

“**He was Called**” is εκληθη

These are both the same root word

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

This section is a response to a single issue.

The issue involves women who are betrothed (engaged in the ancient world)

Verse 38 begins Paul’s conclusion with “So then. . .”

It appears an ascetic view of marriage had infiltrated some of the believers in Corinth.

It may be that some of the Corinthians taught that it was sinful for a single believing male or women to get married. In verses 28 and 36 Paul says:

- “. . . if a virgin marries **she has not sinned.**”
- “if. . .he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. **He is not sinning.** They should get married.”

Paul’s problem with teaching this is the **conflict between his two views**:

1. Celibacy is better and an easier position to serve God from (7:7; 7:35)
2. Paul completely disagrees with the ascetic position of restraining oneself from marriage in order to be spiritual that the Corinthians apparently held. (7:36; 7:38)

In 7:17-24 Paul tells believers to stay where and as they are when they are called by God to believe (point of salvation). These verses (7:25-40) deal with those who are **caught in the middle** of an engagement (a betrothal which is a legal document that ends in a marriage).

1. Should these people stay “engaged” the rest of their lives?
2. Should these people return to their single lives?
3. Should these people go ahead and finish the betrothal period and get married?

Paul basically says, “What do you want to do?”

Paul says staying single is better (7:38 and other places in chapter 7) which puts him in agreement with the Corinthians actions.

What Paul disagrees with the Corinthians about is their reason for remaining single. Paul disagrees with the Corinthian’s theology that says a person can be more spiritual if they live an ascetic life and remain single.

This section is **void of the imperatives** unless they are restating something from verses 7:1-24 as in 7:27.

This section instead is filled with words and phrases like this:

1. “I give a judgment” 7:25
2. “I think” 7:36
3. “I want to spare you” 7:28
4. “I would like” 7:32
5. “I am saying this for your own good” 7:35
6. “He should do as he wants” 7:36
7. “this man also does the right thing.” 7:37

Three parts of this argument:

1. 7:25-28 – Paul states their slogan, agrees with it but then qualifies it to remove the ascetic side from celibacy.
2. 7:29-35 – Paul states two reasons why he feels celibacy (not asceticism) is an advantage. It is a statement of fact not a statement of right and wrong, or of a higher spiritual plain.
3. 7:36-38 – Paul leaves both options open to the Corinthian believer:
 - a. marry
 - b. remain single
4. Concluding comment to women: 7:39-40 – if husband dies you are free to marry but you will be in the same situation as a virgin single: do you marry or do you stay single? It is your choice but single is better.

7:25

Who are “virgins”? There are three basic views:

- 1) The “virgin” is a father’s daughter who he has the responsibility of letting her marry a young man or not marry a young man.
- 2) A modern view (1902) was some Corinthians had entered into a spiritual marriage where a man and woman lived together as a married couple but without sexual relations. This was something that existed in certain areas of the church between 100-400 AD. Some of the men were having second thoughts and want to consummate their marriages.
- 3) The “virgins” were young believers who had entered into an engagement to be married but were being pressured by the “more spiritual ones” (pneumatics) among the Corinthians not to commit such a “carnal act.”

Paul has no OT verses or direct teachings from Jesus so he shares his opinion under apostolic inspiration.

7:26

But, because of the Lord’s “mercies” (“grace” of Romans 12:3) Paul does have something to say to the issue (and his words are inspired)

“present crisis” is not eschatological because it is already a current crisis.

The word “**crisis**” means “necessity, compulsion of any kind, distress, and calamity. It refers to the current state of things in Corinth and possibly to the state of things for the entire period of church age history.

7:29 - 31

this is focused on the meaning of Christian existence in this present age and not simply a statement about marriage.