

Men's Sunday Night
The Book of 1 Corinthians
Christian Conduct
Lesson 6 - 1 Corinthians 7:1-40
“Building a Solid Marriage”

In the United States today, about every other marriage ends in divorce. Unfortunately, each year there are nearly as many divorces as marriages.

Marriage problems are not just unique in today's society. They have occurred throughout history and were rampant in New Testament times in the Roman Empire. As with their many other problems, much of the marital difficulty that was present in the Corinthian church reflected the pagan and morally corrupt society in which they lived.

Corinth was a cesspool of immorality, one of the most immoral cities in the world of its day. All forms of sexual variation ran rampant and were openly displayed. Loose living was the practice of spouse and neighbor, friend and stranger. Practically everyone dressed to draw attention to their own selves. A decent person could not walk down the street without being eyed and thought about by the tempter or temptress. Sex was the goddess of the Corinthian society. It saturated the government, commerce, recreation, and religion of Corinth.

Now, imagine the church sitting in the midst of such an immoral society. Imagine men and women desiring to live pure and godly lives for the Lord. Imagine the temptations they would face, the pressure to look, touch, and experience; and it was out of such a life that so many had been saved. Think of the enticing temptations and pull that would confront them to return to the world. As you read this chapter, keep in mind: 1. That Corinth was noted for its immorality and lack of standards for the home. 2. That Paul was dealing with local problems that we may or may not face in the same way today. 3. That it was a time of persecution for the Christians.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-9. Pray and answer the following questions:

It is easy to envy what others have. The problem with this is it assumes that what you have is inferior to what you don't have. This is especially true with marriage and singleness. In reality, both have accompanying benefits and problems. Paul saw this in the Corinthian church, where there was tremendous pressure for sexual immorality and a sense of urgency about spreading the Gospel. Single people wanted to be married to avoid sin, and married people wanted more time to serve God. Instead of worrying about what you don't have, thank God for what you do have, and focus on serving God where you are.

1. Paul begins where he left off in chapter 6, with sexual immorality. Although Paul agrees that celibacy is good, why is it impractical for most people? (See 1 Cor. 7:2-9)
2. What practical advice does Paul give to the unmarried and the married for avoiding sexual immorality?
3. Paul's focus is not on what a spouse should receive but what a spouse should give. (See 1 Cor. 7:3-5) Why is this principle important?
4. What is Paul's advice to those who are not married? What optional action does he suggest? (See 1 Cor. 7:8-9)

Read 1 Corinthians 7:10-24. Pray and answer the following questions:

As the Gospel was preached in Corinth, sometimes both a husband and wife became Christians. Sometimes, only one spouse became a believer, leaving a mixed marriage. Still others who responded to the Gospel were unmarried or widows. The Corinthians wanted to know how becoming a Christian would

affect these various relationships. Questions were raised such as: 1. Should a Christian continue to share life's most intimate union with a pagan partner? 2. Should an unmarried Christian marry? 3. Should a widowed believer remarry? 4. How do these situations apply to various religious settings? Paul answered these important questions, often deferring to the record of Jesus. Where no recorded teaching of the Lord's was available, Paul gave his own opinion.

5. How should a believer handle a marriage where his or her spouse is not a Christian?

6. Under what circumstances would Paul seemingly allow for divorce, and why? (See 1 Cor. 7:15-16)

7. What principles from the chapter so far, could help us minister to Christians who are considering separation or divorce?

8. In 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, Paul counsels those who think they are in the wrong situation in life. How does he explain and illustrate the "rule" that applies to such people?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-40. Pray and answer the following questions:

After repeating his statement that singleness is preferable to marriage, Paul identified several tensions associated with the issue of marrying or remarrying. His conclusion was that keeping God's commands is what counts. Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Paul continues on and provides instructions for the unmarried, married, and widows.

9. As Paul continues his teaching on marriage, what advice does he give to both unmarried and married?

10. How you think the Corinthians understood the phrase “*The time is short?*” Time is even shorter now. How might this fact affect your lifestyle?

11. What basic difference between married and unmarried people does Paul describe in verses 32-35? How does this concern affect daily living for us today?

12. In verses 36-40 what closing advice does Paul give?

For Additional Study, Review these Following Scriptures: Matt. 5:31-32; Matt. 19:8-9; 2 Cor. 6:14-16; Col. 3:18-19; Luke 2:36-38; Col. 3:23

Life Application

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.