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1 Corinthians 7
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By Dan Maines

1 Corinthians 7

1 Corinthians 7:1-2

Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of sexual immorality, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

† Paul affirms marriage as the God-ordained safeguard against sexual sin.

† Celibacy has value, but marriage is the proper context for

intimacy.

† Philo (On the Special Laws 3.32) acknowledged marriage as a safeguard against unlawful desires.

1 Corinthians 7:3-4

The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise the wife also to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does, and likewise the husband also does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

† Paul teaches mutual responsibility in marriage, not domination.

† The covenant relationship reflects selfless giving and shared authority.

1 Corinthians 7:5

Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

† Marital intimacy is not to be withheld selfishly.

† Temporary abstinence is permitted only for prayer, but harmony must be restored.

1 Corinthians 7:6-7

But I say this as a concession, not as a command. Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each has his own gift from God, one in this way, and another in that.

† Paul values celibacy for undistracted devotion to God.

† Yet he honors marriage as equally a gift from God.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9

But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control,

they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

† Paul encourages singleness where possible, but marriage is honorable and preferable to sin.

† This reflects both pastoral wisdom and recognition of human weakness.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that a wife is not to leave her husband, but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband, and that a husband is not to divorce his wife.

† Divorce is contrary to the Lord's command.

† Reconciliation is always the goal of Christian marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:12-13

But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not divorce her husband.

† Believers married to unbelievers are to remain in the marriage if the unbelieving spouse is willing.

† The covenant is sanctified by the believer's presence.

1 Corinthians 7:14

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband, for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

† The believer's influence brings sanctity into the household.

† Covenant holiness extends even to children within the family.

1 Corinthians 7:15-16

Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave. The brother or the sister is not enslaved in such cases, but God has called us in peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

- † Abandonment by an unbelieving spouse frees the believer.
- † Peace is the guiding principle, not bondage.

1 Corinthians 7:17

Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this way let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

- † Each believer is called to remain faithful in their current state of life.
- † God's calling sanctifies every circumstance.

1 Corinthians 7:18-20

Was any man already circumcised when he was called? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. Each person is to remain in that state in which he was called.

- † Circumcision has no saving power under the new covenant.
- † Obedience to God matters more than external signs.

1 Corinthians 7:21-24

Were you called as a slave? Do not worry about it, but if you are also able to become free, take advantage of that. For the one who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman, likewise the one who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought for a price, do not become slaves of people. Brothers and sisters, each one is to remain

with God in that condition in which he was called.

† Social status does not define spiritual reality.

† In Christ, slaves are free, and the free are Christ's slaves.

† Josephus (Antiquities 12.257) noted the prevalence of slavery, showing Paul's words had radical impact in context.

1 Corinthians 7:25-28

Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I am offering direction as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. I think, then, that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such people will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

† The "present distress" refers to persecution and the approaching crisis leading up to AD 70.

† Marriage brings added pressures in such times.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

But this I say, brothers and sisters, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none, 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, and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it, for the present form of this world is passing away.

† The time was short, with the end of the old covenant age drawing near.

† Earthly concerns were temporary, as the present order was fading.

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

But I want you to be free of concern. One who is unmarried is

concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord, but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit, but the one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

† Singleness allows undistracted devotion, while marriage carries worldly cares.

† Both are honorable, but undivided service is easier in singleness.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38

But if anyone thinks that he is acting dishonorably toward his virgin, if she is past her youth, and it ought to be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin. Let her marry. But the one who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided in his own heart to keep his own virgin, he will do well. So then, both the one who gives his own virgin in marriage does well, and the one who does not give her in marriage will do better.

† Marriage is good, singleness for the Lord is better.

† Paul esteems both states as honorable choices.

1 Corinthians 7:39-40

A wife is bound as long as her husband lives, but if her husband has died, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is, and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

† Remarriage is permitted for widows, but only to believers.

† Paul affirms that singleness allows greater devotion in such

times of crisis.

How it applies to us today

† 1 Corinthians 7 shows the sanctity of marriage and the value of singleness.

† Both are gifts from God, to be lived faithfully in holiness.

† The believer's calling sanctifies every station of life.

† In Christ, social status, marriage, or singleness do not define us, faithfulness does.

† The urgency of Paul's time reminds us to live with eternity in view, not clinging to the passing world.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Philo, On the Special Laws 3.32 - marriage against unlawful desires

† Josephus, Antiquities 12.257 - slavery in Jewish society

† Deuteronomy 17:7 - remove evil from among you (echoed in discipline context)

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