

1 Corinthians 7:1–40

Marriage, Singleness, and Living for the Lord in a Passing World

Introduction: God’s Wisdom for Complex Lives

The Corinthian church lived in a deeply immoral culture and struggled to think biblically about the body, marriage, and spirituality. Some believers assumed that because the body was flawed, it did not matter what they did with it. Others concluded that true spirituality required abstaining even from marital intimacy. Paul writes to correct both extremes, responding to questions the Corinthians themselves had asked.

Throughout this chapter, Paul speaks pastorally, carefully distinguishing between the Lord’s commands and his own inspired counsel, all under one guiding conviction: time is short, and believers are to live with eternal priorities.

God’s Design for Marriage and Intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:1–5)

Paul begins:

“It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.”

Marriage is God’s provision for sexual expression and mutual companionship. Paul affirms that physical intimacy within marriage is not sinful, unspiritual, or shameful—it is God’s design.

He continues:

“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.”

Marriage is mutual, not domineering. Each spouse willingly serves the other in love.

Paul adds a practical safeguard:

“Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer.”

Even spiritual disciplines must be practiced with wisdom. Neglecting marital intimacy opens the door to temptation. God values both spiritual devotion and marital faithfulness.

Singleness as a Gift, Not a Command (1 Corinthians 7:6–9)

Paul clarifies:

“But I say this as a concession, not as a command.”

Singleness is not a higher spiritual state—it is a gift given to some, not all.

“For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God.”

Those without the gift of self-control should marry:

“For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”

God's will is not frustration or guilt, but holiness lived out in practical ways.

Marriage Is a Covenant (1 Corinthians 7:10–11)

Paul now repeats the Lord's teaching:

"Let not the wife depart from her husband... and let not the husband divorce his wife."

Marriage is not disposable. Separation brings pain and confusion. When separation occurs, reconciliation is God's desire whenever possible.

When One Spouse Believes and the Other Does Not (1 Corinthians 7:12–16)

Paul addresses mixed marriages:

"If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her."

The believing spouse brings spiritual influence into the home:

"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband."

Children in such a home are not spiritually abandoned. God honors the presence of faith.

But Paul also acknowledges painful reality:

"If the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases."

God has called His people to peace, not continual conflict.

Serve God Where You Are (1 Corinthians 7:17–24)

Paul establishes a guiding principle:

"As God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk."

Faith in Christ does not require a complete overhaul of social status. Circumcision, ethnicity, occupation, or freedom do not determine spiritual worth.

"You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men."

Redemption through Christ's blood gives believers a new identity wherever they are.

Living with Eternal Urgency (1 Corinthians 7:25–35)

Paul returns to the theme of urgency:

"The time is short."

Because this world is passing away, believers must hold life loosely. Marriage, sorrow, joy, possessions—all must be submitted to the greater call of devotion to Christ.

Paul explains that singleness can allow undistracted service:

“That you may serve the Lord without distraction.”

This is not condemnation of marriage, but recognition of different callings.

Freedom Guided by Wisdom (1 Corinthians 7:36–40)

Paul closes with pastoral balance. Marriage is honorable. Singleness is honorable. Neither is sinful. Each person must act in faith, conscience, and wisdom.

“She is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”

Every choice must align with devotion to Christ.

Practical Application for Believers

- Honor marriage as God’s design for love, faithfulness, and holiness.
- Embrace singleness as a calling when God provides the grace for it.
- Serve Christ wholeheartedly in whatever season you are in.
- Live with eternal priorities, remembering that this world is passing away.

A Challenge to the Church

The church must resist cultural extremes—both indulgence and legalism. God calls His people to live wisely, lovingly, and faithfully in every season of life, shaped by the cross and the hope of resurrection.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Jesus Christ shed His blood to redeem sinners and restore broken lives. He rose from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord. Whether single or married, broken or hopeful, your life finds its meaning in Him.

If you will turn to Jesus, trust in His finished work, and surrender your life to Him, He will forgive your sin, give you new life, and lead you into God’s best for your future.

Today is the time to belong to Christ and to live for what lasts forever.