

Lesson 5 2 March 2014

Admonitions for Marriage

Lesson Scope: [1 Corinthians 7](#)

Lesson Focus

Corinthian society was steeped in immorality and humanistic thought. No doubt many new believers were dealing with the consequences of their past sinful living and needed further teaching on God's principles for their lives as Christians.

In chapter 7, Paul takes up some questions the Corinthian Christians had apparently asked in a former letter. How should they be thinking about marriage? Should existing marriages be terminated after conversion? Is a marriage valid when one person is a believer and the other is not? What about remarriage?

Corinth was strongly influenced by Greek philosophers, who viewed celibacy as the ideal. This contrasted with Jewish practice, which placed a strong emphasis on marriage and family life.

God has ordained the marriage relationship for the well-being of the human family. Following God's pattern for marriage serves as a bulwark for society and a blessing to the church.

Our society today is like the Corinthian society in Paul's day. Humanism and immorality have paved the way to alternate lifestyles that are an abomination to God. We need to be convinced that the Bible way is the only way that God can bless.

Lesson Aim: To portray a Scriptural view of marriage.

Theme Verse: [1 Corinthians 7:17](#). But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

Lesson Text

Marriage Is Honorable

[1 Corinthians 7:1-3](#) ¹Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman. ²Nevertheless, *to avoid*

fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. ³ Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

1 Corinthians 7:6-8 ⁶ But I speak this by permission, *and* not of commandment. ⁷ For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. ⁸ I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

Put Not Asunder

1 Corinthians 7:10-17 ¹⁰ And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: ¹¹ But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife. ¹² But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. ¹³ And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath called us to peace. ¹⁶ For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife? ¹⁷ But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

Seek First the Kingdom of God

1 Corinthians 7:25-35 ²⁵ Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. ²⁶ I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, *I say*, that *it is* good for a man so to be. ²⁷ Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. ²⁸ But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. ²⁹ But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they

had none; ³⁰ And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; ³¹ And they that use this world, as not abusing *it*: for the fashion of this world passeth away. ³² But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: ³³ But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife. ³⁴ There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her* husband. ³⁵ And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Questions for Study

Marriage Is Honorable

1. How does God's plan for marriage promote moral purity?
2. How is "due benevolence" rendered?
3. How can single Christians find fulfillment in life?

Put Not Asunder

4. List some Scriptures that teach the permanence of marriage.
5. What is verse 15 teaching?
6. What can a believer do to reconcile an unbelieving marriage partner?

Seek First the Kingdom of God

7. What prerequisites for a godly marriage are found in this chapter?
8. How can married partners serve the Lord "without distraction"?

Analyzing the Passage

Paul opens with "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Corinthians 7:1). This seems to be advising men to remain single. However, his greater burden is that moral purity be kept to the highest standard.

Benevolence (1 Corinthians 7:3) means "kindness; goodwill; conjugal duty." It is a duty enjoined upon both partners in a marriage.

Where Paul gives his own judgment on certain issues, he is careful to distinguish it from divine command (1 Corinthians 7:6, 12, 25). Even then, he is led by the Holy Spirit, as a faithful apostle (1 Corinthians 7:25, 40).

The passage makes it clear that a believer is not responsible to preserve his marriage against the will of an unbelieving partner (1 Corinthians 7:15).

"The present distress" (1 Corinthians 7:26) seems to refer to the persecution that the Christians were facing at that time.

Important Teachings

1. Marriage contributes to the purity and happiness of the human race (1 Corinthians 7:1-3).
2. Marriage involves one man and one woman (1 Corinthians 7:2).
3. Individual circumstances and abilities may affect the advisability of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:7).
4. After a separation, the Christian's options are limited to reconciliation or celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).
5. A Christian married to an unbeliever must do his part to preserve the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).
6. Becoming a Christian does not alter one's external state (1 Corinthians 7:17).
7. Marriage presents special challenges in times of persecution (1 Corinthians 7:26, 28).
8. Paul advised the Corinthians to find contentment in their present state (1 Corinthians 7:27).
9. God allows people the choice to marry or remain single (1 Corinthians 7:27-28).
10. Marriage has potential to distract people in their service to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:29, 32-35).

Principles and Applications

Marriage Is Honorable

1. Marriage contributes to the purity and happiness of the human race (1 Corinthians 7:1-3). The close relationship of marriage is designed and blessed by God; it is His answer for the needs and desires He has placed within humanity. All other means of satisfying these desires cause confusion, distrust, and sorrow. As marriage partners respect each other's roles, meet each other's needs, and seek each other's welfare, their individual capabilities can reach their greatest potential.
2. Marriage involves one man and one woman (1 Corinthians 7:2). Mar-

riage is an exclusive relationship. Uncompromising fidelity builds mutual trust, security, and fulfillment that can never be found in carnal man's affairs, serial marriages, and alternate lifestyles.

3. Individual circumstances and abilities may affect the advisability of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:7). Those who are single fill a vital role in the work of the church. Some aspects of volunteer service can be filled best by our single members. Health needs may at times affect one's choice of whether to marry. Those who are not given the choice to marry serve best when they are resigned to God's perfect will.

Put Not Asunder

4. After a separation, the Christian's options are limited to reconciliation or celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Man does not have authority to dissolve the marriage relationship. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9). Keeping the door open to come together again allows God to work in the life of an unbelieving partner.

5. A Christian married to an unbeliever must do his part to preserve the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). Provided his spiritual life is not hindered, the Christian partner should count it a blessing if the unbelieving partner is satisfied to dwell with him. Little deeds of kindness and a spiritual tone in the home are things that the Holy Spirit can use to work in the heart of an unbelieving partner. Children benefit from the security that an intact marriage provides.

6. Becoming a Christian does not alter one's external state (1 Corinthians 7:17). All marriage bonds are sacred and are recognized by God. After a person becomes a Christian, God's will is that he builds on what is already in place. Certainly a believer's marriage is enriched when he follows God's will for his life. The closer a married couple grows to God, the closer they become to each other.

Seek First the Kingdom of God

7. Marriage presents special challenges in times of persecution (1 Corinthians 7:26, 28). The Martyrs Mirror records many accounts of homes that were fractured because of persecution. They stand as shining examples of those who were faithful in spite of fiery trials. Is that same depth of commitment found in our marriages today?

8. Paul advised the Corinthians to find contentment in their present state

(1 Corinthians 7:27). Both marriage and single life have unique challenges and privileges. Contentment results from choosing to use one's present situation and opportunities to serve God wholeheartedly.

9. God allows people the choice to marry or remain single (1 Corinthians 7:27-28). Marriage and single life are both gifts from God. One is not morally better than the other, and both are valuable to accomplishing God's purposes. Therefore, when selfish interests are laid aside, the church is benefited and God is glorified in either situation.

10. Marriage has potential to distract people in their service to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:29, 32-35). Marriage is an earthly relationship. When it is pursued and enjoyed as the ultimate goal in life, it becomes a distraction to God's work. Financial pressures involved in providing for a family can also be a hindrance, if they are not kept subservient to spiritual priorities.

Answers to Questions

1. How does God's plan for marriage promote moral purity?

Man's needs are met when he follows God's plan for marriage as outlined in Scripture. When husband and wife nurture the marriage relationship, they do not want to go elsewhere to fulfill their God-given desires. The home also provides an ideal environment for nurturing children in a morally sound atmosphere.

2. How is "due benevolence" rendered?

A husband gives honor to his wife as unto the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7). Kindness and courtesy are a normal and beautiful part of the marriage relationship. Benevolence includes faithfully living out marital vows.

3. How can single Christians find fulfillment in life?

By recognizing that in God's sight they can be just as useful as married people. Some areas of service such as school teaching and voluntary service are filled best by single people.

4. List some Scriptures that teach the permanence of marriage. Matthew 5:32; Mark 10:5-12; Luke 16:18

5. What is verse 15 teaching?

If an unbeliever leaves his believing marriage partner, the believer is not responsible to preserve the marriage. God wills that the believer strive for unity rather than separation, but it is never right to give up the

faith to preserve a marriage.

Sometimes it is in the children's best interest to let the unbelieving partner leave, to promote peace in the home.

6. What can a believer do to reconcile an unbelieving marriage partner? Prayer is very important. Rejoice in positive responses and be not discouraged by negative responses. Ask for his input in matters, show love and respect to him, and love and respect the children.

7. What prerequisites for a godly marriage are found in this chapter? Love, respect, contentment, and devotion; loyalty and pure conduct that give no reason to question one's fidelity. We should recognize marriage as a gift from God (1 Corinthians 7:7) to be used for His glory rather than for self-gratification.

8. How can married partners serve the Lord "without distraction"? They can work together to establish priorities and keep spiritual needs foremost. Earthly responsibilities should be kept modest and manageable.

Summarizing the Lesson

Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate;
A work of lowly love to do
For Him on whom I wait.
—Anna L. Waring

Research Guide

1. Read the section titled "Marriage" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.
2. Study the Scriptures listed under "Marriage" in *Nave's Topical Bible*.