

Ready to Throw in the Towel

1 Corinthians 7_10-24 Ready to Throw in the Towel

Before we look at the passage before us, I want to make two comments that affect everything else I say.

First comment, this is a difficult passage.

It contains some hard problems.

Though difficult, it contains two fundamental principles that are easy to understand.

If you walk away with nothing else, **get these two principles:**

1. MARRIAGE IS FOREVER!

2. STAY THE WAY YOU ARE!

2nd comment is for those whose marriage is already broken.

We must understand an important part of what Paul is trying to tell us:

He did not write this to send you on a guilt trip about the past.

God doesn't do that to people.

God isn't into sending people on guilt trips!

God wants to change *your future*, NOT condemn *your past*.

Satan is the "accuser of the brethren" NOT God.

Paul didn't write this passage to do that to you either!

He's looking at *your future*, not *your past*.

You can't go back and undo yesterday.

But you can trust God for tomorrow.

God's word to those whose past is already destroyed: **Stay as you are!**

`Don't try to go back and fix your past!

Let's look at what God says about our marriages today, or perhaps in your future:

"Til death do us part!"

Yet, nearly 50% of modern marriages end in divorce.

Margaret Mead: "The problem with modern marriage is that it's so terminable!"

God's view of marriage: *Marriage is forever!*

Married life is full of problems!

Where's the great "man of God" in the Bible who never had a problem in his home?

Where's the modern pastor or missionary who has never had a family problem?

Examine our home closely and you'll find we have to deal with problems just like you do!

Married life is full of problems!

We spend a few hours in counseling prior to marriage, trying to prepare a young couple for the problems they'll face. Then we turn them loose, to spend the rest of their lives trying to resolve the problems that develop afterwards.

Married life is full of problems!

Once when I was preaching on 1 Cor. 7 to a group of young people, Helen said: "*Hey, you better preach a positive message about marriage! Don't scare them!*" I AGREE!

Marriage can be wonderful!

Song of Solomon describes the beauty of married love and the physical expression of that love.

Eph. 5—presents the ideal pattern of what marriage ought to look like—when we show love and respect for one another.

Other passages talk about the positive side of marriage.
I'm not a pessimist about marriage.

I recommend it highly!

BUT—1 Cor. 7—isn't talking about that side of marriage.

Paul's a realist here.

He's talking about the hard realities we face in marriage today.

We all have to deal with these sooner or later!

What do you do then?

Married life is full of problems!

The Bible presents an attitude radically different than the world.

The world doesn't understand it.

The world says, "When things get rough, I'm leaving!"

"If it doesn't work out, you can always get a divorce."

In 7:1-9, Paul presents one of the main purposes of marriage: to satisfy our sexual need and help us overcome the constant barrage of temptation.

[Beginning in 7:10, Paul talks about some of the *problems* related to marriage.]

INSTRUCTION ABOUT MARRIAGE FOR MARRIED PEOPLE 7:10-24

He realizes that in marriage there will always be problems.

When two different personalities try to become one, there will be tension and conflict.

Every marriage has bad days!

There are times when we think, "***Let's just throw in the towel.*** It's not worth it!"

Paul writes about those hard times.

Basic Principle: MARRIAGE IS FOREVER

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MARRIED BELIEVERS 7:10-11

Among believers, DIVORCE ISN'T AN OPTION.

He instructs married believers to remain together or, if they insist on separating, they aren't to remarry.

"A company wanted to illustrate the strength of its glue. Their ad pictured two blocks of wood glued together. Attached to each block was a chain, and to each chain, a large horse. The horses were pulling in opposite directions. The artist added a giant hand clasping the pieces of wood in a vise-like grip." The giant hand represented their glue's strength. It's an even better illustration of God's hand holding our marriage together!

James Dobson quotes a letter his father wrote to his mother before they were married. *"I want you to understand my feelings concerning the marriage covenant we're about to enter. I have been taught at my mother's knee and in harmony with the Word of God that marriage vows are inviolable; by entering them I am binding myself absolutely and for life. The idea of estrangement from you through divorce for any reason will never be permitted to enter my thinking. I'm not naive in this. I'm fully aware of the possibility, unlikely as it now appears, that mutual incompatibility or other unforeseen circumstances could result in extreme mental suffering. If such becomes the case, I am resolved for my*

part to accept it as a consequence of the commitment I am now making, and to bear it, if necessary, to the end of our lives together."

If you do separate, you have two alternatives:

- 1) **Stay as you are**, without remarrying.
- 2) **Seek reconciliation**. Be reconciled. Reconciliation is always better.

MARRIAGE IS FOREVER!

I don't give marriage a chance unless a couple is committed to permanence!

When problems arise, and they will arise, . . .

When you feel like throwing in the towel, and there *will* be days like that, . . .

unless you believe that marriage is forever, NO ONE will hang in there!

If marriage is forever, you must deal with the question: "How do you want it to be?"

When hard times come, you'd better decide to reconcile quickly, because you have a long time to endure together!

Who wants to spend the rest of their life in conflict?

If you don't, you'd better go after a long-term, reconciliation fast!

There's probably not a married person here who has never thought of throwing in the towel at one time or another.

Ruth Graham's interview at their 40th wedding anniversary.

When you deal seriously with the fact that divorce isn't an option for the child of God, then you had better find a way to be reconciled.

Warren Wiersbe (quoting an attorney friend:

"The only people who profit from divorce are lawyers."

INSTRUCTIONS FOR BELIEVERS MARRIED TO UNBELIEVERS 7:12-16

Marrying unbelievers is never recommended.

Old Testament prohibits it. Ezra 10:10-11

New Testament advises against it. 2 Cor 6:14-16

**Primary purpose of marriage—companionship
—contradicts it. 6:14-16**

"Shall two people walk together, unless they are in agreement?" Amos 3:3

"Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't!" How can you go together?

[But such marriages do exist. So, what do we do about it?]

What to do when an unbeliever wants to stay 7:12-14

1) Stay as long as the *unsaved* person wants to keep the marriage alive. 12-13

Try to make the best of a difficult situation.

Seek the best in it.

Try to maintain peace in the marriage. Seek reconciliation and peace.

2) Seek the salvation of the unsaved partner 14, 16

As long as they live together, a Christian will have an effect on the unsaved.

Not totally clear what this means!

There is a purifying effect.

O.T. perspective: **Hag. 2:11-13**

Ceremonial defilement is communicated

Ceremonial cleanness is not.

If this principle were true in N.T., then the marriage is contaminated.

But, Paul asserts the opposite.

Sanctification *is* communicated.

“Sanctification” —*Haggiazo*—views

- 1) Unbelieving brother is saved—“unbelieving” denies this.
- 2) Guarantee of his ultimate salvation
- 3) Set apart by God as partner of a saved person—place of privilege.

The expression can be used without any resulting visible change

It isn't talking about *personal* sanctification.

It's talking about the social effect—the influence of a saved person in the home, if they live according to the principles of God's word.

Laban's household was blessed because of Jacob (Gen. 30:27).

It was “set apart” for God's special blessing.

It results in people acknowledging that God is at work there.

Potiphar's household was blessed because of Joseph (39:5)
So non-Christian mates are blessed because of their spouses.

Saved person may influence unsaved person's life, and lead him to Christ

This should NEVER be a reason for marrying an unsaved person.

1 Peter 3:1-4

3) Seek the salvation and sanctification of the children 14b

"If this weren't true, they'd be unclean" – assumes they are clean.

They're no longer seen as impure, like they are in the O.T.
They too are impacted by a Christian life lived out before them at home.

Their parent's godly life has a spiritual impact on them.

Joe Bayly is a godly, Christian writer, whose family endured many tragedies. One of their three sons died at age 5 of leukemia. Another died in an accident at 18. The third son later turned his back on his faith and his parents. He began taking drugs and refused to show respect for his parents' values and rights. Finally they confronted him. "If you can't live by the rules of our home and can't respect our faith, you'll have to move out."

So he moved out to live in a coed house on campus. He slept in a sleeping bag on the floor. The house was always a mess. It broke their hearts to see their son living that way, but it was his choice.

One night, after he'd been gone a few months, the phone rang at 2 a.m. It was the police from a neighboring town. The officer said that they had picked up his son and wanted Joe to come post bail. Joe thought he heard the name of the town, but when he went to that police station, there was no record of his son being picked up. He thought of another town with a similar name. Again nothing. He drove to five different police stations. None of them knew anything about his son.

Joe decided it must have been a crank call, so he drove by the house where his son was staying. It was past 4 a.m. Joe walked into his son's room and saw him sleeping soundly. He didn't wake him. He just went over, leaned down, kissed him, and left.

Soon the Baylys noticed a change in their son. Within a year he made a complete change and even felt called to seminary. One day Joe asked his son, "When did this change start?" "Dad, it was that night when you came into the house, you thought I was sleeping, but I wasn't. When you didn't yell at me, or wake me, I was surprised. You kissed me. And I said, 'If my Dad loves me that much, I've got to change.'"

Godly parents who love their children model commitment to Christ, so their children learn what godly living looks like, as they observe their parents' commitment to Him.

What to do when an unbeliever wants to separate
7:15

**When the unsaved one no longer wants to stay,
let him/her go!**

Let them go. They shouldn't be forced to stay together.
 Maybe they'll miss the godly spouse and loving concern.

No permission is given for remarriage.

v. 16 Asks the question from pessimistic perspective:

How do you know?

Optimistic Perspective– 3 reasons to maintain the marriage:

- 1) A saved person has a sanctifying effect on the whole family**
- 2) God has called us to live in peace**
- 3) Unsaved partner may be won to Christ.**

**COUNSEL ABOUT MARRIAGE FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN:
7:17-24**

Basic Principle: STAY AS YOU ARE!

Principle stated 17

Paul states same principle for marriage as for other areas of life: God's children should remain as they were when God called them to salvation.

Illustration from circumcision 18-19

Circumcision itself is of no great value.

What is of value is obeying God

Illustration from slavery 20-23

If you can better yourself for the cause of Christ, do it!

But *don't* become a slave.

Don't put yourself in bondage to others.

Application of principle 24

The subject is still marriage.

The unmarried are better off to stay as they are.

Those who are married ought not to try to change that.

However, if there's a need, it's still better to marry – v. 9

There's nothing wrong with marriage.

Critical observations for us today:

1. God's people are never authorized to take the initiative in seeking a divorce. Marriage is permanent.

2. Christians who do separate (divorce) are to stay single or be reconciled to their mate.

All the way through Paul makes concessions.

Here he makes none!

3. Christians married to unbelievers are to stay as long as their mate wants them to stay.

(True of those who "act like unbelievers too!")

4. There's no reference to a guilty or innocent party.

5. Paul's is not referring to "battered wives".

You may need to separate for physical protection.

6. Divorce is a reality.

As a church we're responsible to show love and comprehension for those suffering from a present or past relationship.

Every marriage faces moments when you feel like throwing in the towel!

Our only hope to survive such moments is a life-time commitment.

God's Word teaches us: **MARRIAGE IS FOREVER!**

STAY AS YOU ARE!

We ought to make a life-time commitment to that truth!

This kind of marriage requires God's power!

To hang in there and endure the hard times—without throwing in the towel, requires God's work in our life!

We'll never establish that kind of commitment in our own strength!

=> "I Need Thee Every Hour!"