

A BETTER CHOICE

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

Swindoll: Congested intersection at rush hour—man waiting to cross with panicked look, instead of "walk" sign, "good luck" sign.

Guy wanting to marry a "GREAT" non-Christian girl:

God doesn't just say "Good Luck! I hope it works out for you!"

He says "Don't marry her!" **2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 7:39**

Christian couple having trouble decide to divorce and start over with someone else.

God doesn't just say "Good Luck!"

He tells them to stay together and work out their problems.

7:10-11

Woman wanting to leave her unsaved husband and find a Christian one:

God doesn't say, "Good Luck!"

He says don't do it! Stay with the unsaved husband. **7:12-13**

That's the kind of counsel Paul gives in 1 Cor. 7.

He doesn't just wish us good luck and send us out to find our own way!

He gives specific instructions about what God expects in each situation.

CONCERNING MARRIAGE 7

Purpose (and need) for marriage 7:1-9

We need marriage because we're bombarded daily by temptation—on our television, our computer, movies, books and magazines.

God's answer for the temptations that invade our lives *isn't* abstinence—it's *marriage!*

Instruction about marriage 7:10-40

For those who are married 7:10-24

Married believers 7:10-11 => stay together, however bad things get.

Mixed marriages 7:12-24

Unbeliever wanting to stay 7:12-14 => stay with them

Unbeliever wanting to separate 7:15-16 => let them go

Basic principle for God's people:

Remain as God called you! 7:17-24

Don't try to change the plan! Don't try to get out of it!

For those who are unmarried 7:25-40

His counsel seems to go "against the grain" of everything we hear from people around us these days—*even Christian people*:

Gen. 2:18 tells us God prefers man to be married—the original plan wasn't singleness.

Paul suggests that singleness isn't for everyone, but that some have the gift of being single. 1 Cor. 7:7.

Those who remain single leave themselves open to temptations to immorality;

Our culture is developing an anti-marriage sentiment and philosophy.

Why? Immaturity (inability to face the realities and responsibilities of life), self-centeredness (desire to be free and uncommitted so we can do our own thing), fear of failure?

Marriage needs to be restored to its God-intended position of respect and desirability!

But what about 1 Cor 7:25-40?

Instruction about marriage for the UNmarried.

Popular religious counsel says that if you want to serve God you'd better get married!

People don't trust single ministers!

Paul has a different perspective; his words are clear:

IT'S BETTER NOT TO MARRY!

7:1 – *"It's good for a man not to touch a woman."*

7:7 – *"I wish that all men were even as I myself am."*

7:8 – *"I say to the unmarried and to widows that it's good for them if they remain as I am."*

7:17 – *"as God has called each, in this manner let him walk."*

7:20 – *"Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called."*

7:24 – *"let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called."*

7:26 – (concerning the unmarried) *"it is good for a man to remain as he is."*

7:27 – *"Are you released (loosed) from a wife? Do not seek a wife."*

7:39-40 – (concerning a widow) *"she is happier if she remains as she is."*

[He applies this principle to the]

UNMARRIED YOUNG 7:25-35 FOR SINGLES

The case for celibacy **7:25**

Paul says this is his personal opinion, NOT a command from God.

Some people assume that this word doesn't bear the authority of Scripture; it's just Paul's personal opinion—that /S what he says.

However, it may be better to understand this as Paul's way of answering their question, *under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*.

He can't point to an O.T. chapter and verse to authenticate his opinion, ... Jesus never spoke about this issue, ...

But Paul still recommends celibacy

(within guidelines established in first few verses of ch. 7)

Since God includes the counsel in His Word,

it *NOW* becomes Scripture and *IS* a word from God.

However you understand this phrase, this *is* clearly his preference as an apostle, a trusted spokesperson, sent by God.

and the counsel *IS* included in God's Word!

[Principle applied to] **PARENTS OF VIRGINS** [NAS]

7:36-38 (or, **an engaged couple** [NIV])

[NAS] But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she should be of full age, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry. 37 But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well. 38 So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

[NIV] If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. 37 But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his

own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. 38 So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.

Word is not used for "marry" but for "to give in marriage"

Either way, the principle's the same:

Single is better, but marriage isn't sin!

There's freedom in this area.

People tend to force *their* choice on others.

Love allows people to make a different choice than I have.

Just because marriage is better for *ME* doesn't mean marriage is better for *everyone*!

Love grants freedom for you to make different choices than I make!

[Principle applied to] **WIDOWS 7:39-40 (Cp. 1 Tim. 5:9-13)**

The same is true of a widow who wishes to remarry.

1 Tim. 5:9-13—younger widows were *supposed* to remarry.

Paul thinks a widow is better off to stay single and serve the Lord, but if she has the urge to marry, that's alright.

REASONS TO REMAIN SINGLE

Key thought: "DO NOT SEEK A WIFE!" 7:27

Paul isn't *against* marriage.

It isn't *sin* to marry.

But neither should marriage be your *priority*!

Don't spend your time *looking for* a wife! **WHY?**

1) Marriage causes stress. 7:26-28

• **Added stress under affliction and persecution**

7:26 *"Because of the present crisis (NAS -"distress")*

=> violence, torture, pain, anguish, distress => *Persecution*

Christians are suffering on account of their faith.

If you have a wife and family, the time of affliction is much more difficult and painful. They suffer too.

Some people respond that we don't suffer for our faith today as they did

Experts in history and the world scene affirm that more people are suffering for their faith today than at any time in history.

To the extent we believe Christians will suffer for their faith in the next generation in *our* country, this caution is still in effect!

• **Added trouble in this life 7:28b**

"Those who marry will face many troubles in this life" =>
AFFLICTION

• **Added concern about the things of the world**

7:33-34

• **A married person's interests are divided 7:34a**

2) Marriage binds you to the worldly and the temporary 7:29-31

Time is short

The whole dispensation is pressed together

I'm sure Paul didn't foresee a period of 2000 years.

We run opposite danger—thinking that since it's been 2000 years, Christ might not come for a *long* time.

Paul's point is that Jesus is coming *soon*, and there is much to do.

Don't get bogged down with the worldly and temporary things of this life!

Some people use this to justify abandoning family for ministry.

Surrounding verses indicate that is *NOT* what he means. His comparisons indicate the importance of being disassociated from the world—not fully involved, not all wrapped up in it!

Emotionally Materially Physically Familiably

In a family, it's easy to get tied to the world and its things. We're to *USE* but not *ABUSE*.

Make full use of what God has given us, use it to the uttermost, but don't overuse it; don't cling to it!

We're NOT to be tied to, nor live for what we own.

Our possessions are not to possess us!

That same principle is true of our *families*.

We're to enjoy them.

We're to be concerned about their needs.

But we aren't to *cling to them!*

3) **Singles have fewer distractions;**

Singles can concentrate on serving God 7:32-35

Paul wants to free us from concern—to secure undistracted devotion to God

Marriage distracts us from the Lord's work

"I don't want to put a noose on you" 7:35

Pastor Joel, pastor in Papua New Guinea

Gets up long before dawn every morning to go fishing to provide food for his family.

He goes to the base to work all day as a mechanic to earn money for his family's needs.

Then, in whatever time is left, he tries to meet the needs of the church.

If he didn't have a family, he could eat at work, and devote full time to serving God.

He wouldn't have to worry about feeding and providing for a family.

Godly use of celibacy: If God has chosen to leave you single, take advantage of that state to live for Him in a godly way.

HOW TO LIVE IF YOU'RE SINGLE

- 1) **Don't waste your energy trying to get out of it!**
7:27

Don't try to change that.

Take advantage of the freedom it offers. *Use it for God's glory!*

- 2) **Dedicate your life to serving the Lord without distraction 7:35**

Devotion => constantly attending, constant waiting on the Lord
< sitting beside, as at table; > an adviser, associate

Remember Mary's role: sitting at Jesus feet

[Many years ago a pastor gave Billy Graham a copy of a letter sent to a young woman in his church by her fiancée, who had become a Communist, to break off their engagement:]

"We Communists have a high casualty rate. We are the ones who get shot and hung and lynched and tarred and feathered and jailed and slandered and ridiculed and fired from our jobs and in every other way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. WE LIVE IN VIRTUAL POVERTY. WE TURN BACK TO THE PARTY EVERY PENNY WE MAKE ABOVE WHAT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO KEEP US ALIVE.

"We Communists don't have the time or the money for many movies or concerts or T-bone steaks or decent homes and new cars We have been described as fanatics. We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor—the struggle for world communism. We Communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money could buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty personal selves into a great movement of humanity and if our personal lives seem hurt or our egos seem to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that each of us in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind.

"There is one thing in life in which I'm dead earnest and that is the communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife and mistress, my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night.

"It's hold on me grows, not lessens, as time goes on. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life I evaluate people, books, ideas and actions according to

how they effect the communist cause and by their attitude toward it. I have already been in jail because of my ideas and if necessary I'm ready to go before a firing squad."

In the communist world, this same attitude, held by a radical Christian minority led to the downfall of the communist political machinery in much of Eastern Europe.

What impact is Christianity making in our country?

Are we willing to make this kind of undistracted commitment to serve the Lord?

Single Christians are in a better position to serve God without distraction and make that kind of impact on our society, if they use their freedom to serve God wholeheartedly, with total commitment to Him!

3) Allow God to find the right partner for you

Matt. 6:33

Arranged marriages—let GOD arrange your marriage.

Don't get caught up in trying to "make something happen!"

Don't try to "keep the train from leaving without you!"

Concentrate on serving Him without distraction!

That should be our priority; NOT finding a spouse.

Paul says: *"Don't seek a wife!"*

Jesus says: *"Seek God's kingdom and HIS righteousness and He'll take care of the other things you need!"*

Young people waste so much time worrying about finding a spouse, and trying to work it all out.

Let God worry about that for you!

He knows just what you need.

COUNSEL FOR THE MARRIED:

1) If you're married, stay as you are

– Don't try to get loose!

7:27 *"Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. ..."*

2) If you're married, don't focus on temporary things

The temporary things of this world can possess us 7:29-31

Don't cling to your family or to your possessions!

Let God handle those things. You live for Him!

3) If you're married, your priority: to please your spouse 7:32-34

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR LIFE?

We should use our energy to serve the Lord, to extent God gives us freedom to do that.

If you're single, don't focus on that, focus on living for God.

If *HE* wants you to marry, *He'll* provide the right person—in *HIS* time!

Don't try to impose what's right for you on others!

You live as God called *you* to live.

Let *God* deal with how He calls others to live!

Love appreciates the diversity of how God calls people to serve Him.