

One of the most important decisions a person will ever make has to do with marriage. Next to the decision to become a follower of Christ, there is no more significant, life-changing decision than the one regarding marriage. *Should I get married?*

The Bible gives valuable counsel for this important question, as we began to see last time. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7 addresses the subject of marriage and singleness. His material builds upon itself by moving through five issues...

*Review: from last time...*

#### I. General Instruction about Marriage (1-7)

##### **A. Singleness is preferable in times of persecution (1).**

1. *This isn't because marriage is bad.*
2. *This isn't because physical intimacy is bad.*
3. *This is because of the unusual strain persecution brings (26, 32-35).*  
We'll discuss this more a little later.

##### **B. Marriage is still appropriate (2-7).**

Paul mentions four reasons...

1. *It prevents immorality (2).*
2. *It meets legitimate needs (3-4).*
3. *It protects from temptation (5).*
4. *It is a proper response to the gift of God (6-7).*

#### II. Specific Instruction about Marriage (8-16)

Paul addresses three groups...

##### **A. Here is instruction for the unmarried (8-9).**

1. *Stay unmarried if possible.*
2. *If necessary, marry.*

##### **B. Here is instruction for the married (10-11).**

1. *Don't separate.*
2. *If separation occurs, the goal is reconciliation.*

##### **C. Here is instruction for the rest (12-16).**

Real life scenario #1:

If a believer has an unbelieving spouse, and  
If the unbelieving spouse is willing to stay married...

1. *Don't divorce the unbeliever (12-13).*
2. *The believer's presence has a sanctifying effect on the rest of the family (14).*

Real life scenario #2:

If the unbeliever leaves (i.e. initiates the breakup of the marriage)...

1. *Let him go.*
2. *The believer is not bound.*
3. *We are called to live in peace.*

*New Material...*

### III. An Important Principle regarding Marriage (17-24)

Read v 17. What did Paul say we should do?

Read v 24. There Paul repeats the same charge. Here's the principle...

**\*\*Stay in the position you were in when God saved you (17, 24).**

In the verses between these two charges Paul gives some examples of what he means.

#### **A. That's true if you were circumcised or uncircumcised (18-20).**

Read verses 18-20.

When a person becomes a Christian, all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17). But not everything changes. Nor should it. For instance, God saved me when I was eleven. Before I became a Christian, I was a part of a middle class family, with two parents, living in a farm house in the country, and a student in the local school. After I became a Christian, none of that changed. I didn't quit school, move to another home, change economic levels, etc. I remained in the position I was in when God saved me.

Q: What did Paul say a person should do if they weren't circumcised when they became a Christian? What if they had been?

Another example...

#### **B. That's true if you were a slave or a free person (21-24).**

Q: What counsel did Paul give a person who was a slave when saved? Vv 21-22

Q: What counsel did he give a free person? V 23

But what does this have to do with the context? Remember Paul is talking to Christians about what to do if they are single, or if they are married to a non-believer, etc. He's giving a helpful principle...

#### **C. That's also true in your marital status (by implication).**

Q: Who are we responsible to, according to v 24?

Discuss: What are the implications of this principle? The fact is that when saved, our relationship with God changes. But that doesn't mean the rest of our relationships don't matter, or that we should abandon them. Especially marriage. We are to remain in the situation God placed us in when He called us, if at all possible.

Paul will apply this principle more specifically in the following section...

### IV. Some further instruction about Virgins (25-38)

Q: Where did this instruction originate? V 25

#### **A. Here is some counsel for the unmarried (25-28).**

1. *Because of the current crisis, remain in your current state (25-27).*

a. If you are married, stay married.

b. If you are single, don't look for a spouse.

2. *If you do marry, it's not wrong (28a).*

3. *If you do marry, it will create challenges (28b).*

Discuss: What are examples of the challenges?

#### **B. Here are the facts (29-31).**

1. *Time is short (29a).*

What time is short? This could be taken in a couple of ways. One, the time of this age is short. Second, the time to do the Lord's work in this age is short.

2. *It's not wise to get too attached to the world (29b-30).*

Q: How can a person tell if they are becoming "too attached?"

3. *The world is passing away (31).*

We tend to live as though things will always be as we see them now. They won't.

**C. Here are some advantages of singleness (32-35).**

Read verses 32-35.

1. *A single person can be devoted solely to the Lord (32-34).*

2. *A single person doesn't struggle with competing loyalties (35).*

Is marriage bad then? No. It's just different.

Please notice that *good* things can divide our devotion to the Lord. A spouse. A child. A job.

Discuss: How can we tell if a "good" thing has taken the wrong place in our lives?

**D. Here is what an "engaged" couple should do in a time of persecution (36-38).**

Remember, here Paul is giving very specific guidance to "engaged" Christian couples wanting specific guidance on what to do about marriage plans.

Read verses 36-38.

1. *If they want to marry, that's fine.*

2. *If they want to remain single, that's even better (considering the circumstances).*

Q: Again, why does Paul say it's "even better?"

V. Here are some final stipulations (39-40).

**A. Marriage is for life.**

Q: For how long is a woman "bound"?

**B. When a spouse dies...**

1. *You are free to remarry.*

2. *You may marry anyone as long as the person is a believer.*

Discuss: What happens when a Christian marries a non-Christian?

Sadly, many people think, "It will be different for me. We'll get married, and then later I'll lead my spouse to Christ." What's wrong with this thinking?

3. *You may be happier if you stay single (in times of persecution).*

Q: Why does Paul say this?

Q: What does Paul mean when he says he too "has the Spirit of God?"