

It's Time to Be Holy  
1 Corinthians 7:1-16

Introduction: Just want to refresh our memories about this letter that Paul has written to the church in Corinth. It is in response to information he has received from Chloe's household about some of the activities that have been taking place. There was the issue of cliques—"I follow Cephas", "I follow Apollos", "I follow Paul" and there were moral and ethical problems that needed to be addressed.

In chapter 7, Paul now begins to answer questions he received in a letter from the Corinthian church. Remember, this is a church fresh out of paganism and they need a great deal of instruction in what it means to be truly holy.

**1 Corinthians 7:1-2, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.'<sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband."**

1. There are usually those within the church who go from one extreme to the next; this was probably a group of believers who had decided that even sexual relations within marriage was wrong.

2. Paul does away with that idea by stating that part of the reason for marriage is so that sexual relations can be enjoyed without sinning.

**1 Corinthians 7:3-4, "<sup>3</sup>The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup>For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."**

1. Paul places women and men on equal footing in the area of sexual intimacy. This was an unheard of at the time! So much for Paul hating women!

2. Marriage makes both men and women off limits to others. "Forsaking all others..."

**1 Corinthians 7:5, "Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."**

1. Sexual abstinence in marriage must be agreed upon by both the husband and the wife and only for a short time.

2. Sexual union is an expected part of marriage, not only a delight but also a debt owed to one's wife or husband.

3. It is wrong to put our spouse at risk of being tempted.

**1 Corinthians 7:6-9, "Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. <sup>7</sup>I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.**

**<sup>8</sup>To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. <sup>9</sup>But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion."**

1. Paul is faithful to distinguish between what is commanded by God and what is his personal preference.

2. Paul realizes that a celibate life is not possible for everyone and that singleness would lead many Christians into sexual temptation.

**1 Corinthians 7:10-11, "To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband <sup>11</sup> (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife."**

1. Wives are not to separate from their husbands on the grounds that they do not want to have sexual intimacy.

2. Separation should be done with reconciliation as its goal.

3. Husbands are not to divorce their wives in hopes of finding sexual fulfillment elsewhere.

**1 Corinthians 7:12-13, "To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy."**

1. Having an unbelieving spouse is not grounds for divorce.

2. An unbelieving spouse enjoys the benefits of the marriage covenant because of having a believing spouse.

3. Children who have a believing parent benefit from the marriage covenant and are recipients of God's grace and mercy.

**1 Corinthians 7:15-16, "But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. <sup>16</sup> For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?"**

1. A Christian is not obligated to insist that the marriage remain intact.

2. Insisting on the unbelieving spouse to remain prevents being able to live in peace.

3. Insisting on the unbelieving spouse to remain does not guarantee their salvation.

Conclusion: Marriage is without a doubt one of the most difficult relationships we can experience. It isn't 50/50. It's a 100% up to me without watching to see if my spouse is giving 100%. It is a continuous opportunity to die to self and seek another's well-being. And it is completely impossible without the grace of God!