CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 — Marriage, Singleness, and Devotion to the Lord

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 begins a new section of Paul's letter.

Up to this point, Paul has been responding to reports he heard about the church.

Now he turns to questions the Corinthians had written to him.

“Now concerning the matters you wrote about.”

The first question was about marriage.

The church in Corinth was pulled in two opposite directions.

In Chapter 6, we saw that some believers thought the body did not matter, so sexual sin was no big deal.

But others went to the opposite extreme.

They thought the body was so unspiritual that married couples should stop having relations, and single people should never marry.

Paul answers with balance and wisdom.

Marriage is good.

It is God's gift and a safeguard against sexual sin.

Husbands and wives belong to each other and must care for each other's needs.

Singleness is also good.

It is a gift that frees a person to serve the Lord with undivided devotion.

Paul also deals with hard questions.

Can a believer divorce?

What if a believer is married to an unbeliever?

Should a slave seek freedom?

Should engaged couples go ahead and marry?

Can a widow remarry?

Through it all, Paul keeps returning to one great principle:

Live faithfully for the Lord in the situation where God has called you.

And he reminds them that this world in its present form is passing away.

Marriage, singleness, joy, sorrow, buying, and selling are all temporary.

What lasts is devotion to the Lord.

The chapter moves through ten movements:

- Principles of Marriage (verses 1–5).
- The Gift of Singleness and Marriage (verses 6–9).
- Instruction to Married Believers (verses 10–11).
- Believers Married to Unbelievers (verses 12–16).
- Live as You Are Called (verses 17–24).
- Concerning Virgins and the Unmarried (verses 25–28).
- Living with Eternity in View (verses 29–31).
- Focused Devotion to the Lord (verses 32–35).
- Advice on Marriage and Virginity (verses 36–38).
- Widows and Remarriage (verses 39–40).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 7 is:

Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God, and whatever our situation, we are called to live faithfully where God has placed us, with undivided devotion to the Lord, because this world is passing away.

I. IT IS GOOD NOT TO MARRY

1 Corinthians 7:1 — "Now Concerning the Matters You Wrote About"

"Now concerning the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry."

Paul begins answering the Corinthians' letter.

The phrase **"now concerning"** will appear several times in this letter as Paul moves from one question to the next.

The first topic is marriage.

"It is good for a man not to marry."

Many Bible students believe Paul is quoting a saying from the Corinthians' own letter.

Some in the church were teaching that it was more spiritual to avoid marriage and sexual relations altogether.

Paul agrees that there is something good about singleness.

He himself was single.

But as the next verses show, he does not agree that marriage is less spiritual.

God made marriage, and He called it good.

Paul will correct the extreme while honoring what is true.

Cross References

Matthew 19:12

> Some are unable to marry because they were born that way. Some were made that way by others. And some have chosen not to marry for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this should accept it.

Genesis 2:18

> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.”

1 Timothy 4:3

> They forbid people to marry and tell them not to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be received with thanks by those who believe and know the truth.

Spiritual Principle

Singleness is good, and marriage is good; neither is more spiritual than the other.

Spiritual Warning

Any teaching that treats marriage as unspiritual goes against God's design.

II. EACH MAN HIS OWN WIFE

1 Corinthians 7:2 — Marriage as a Safeguard

“But because of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.”

Paul now gives the balance.

“Because of sexual immorality.”

Corinth was a city full of sexual temptation.

Pretending that sexual desire does not exist would not make it go away.

God's good plan for sexual desire is marriage.

Notice the words **“his own”** and **“her own.”**

Marriage is between one man and one woman.

It is exclusive.

Paul is not saying that the only reason to marry is to avoid sin.

Elsewhere the Bible speaks of marriage as companionship, partnership, and a picture of Christ and the church.

But in answer to the Corinthians' question, Paul stresses that marriage is God's protection against immorality.

Cross References

Genesis 2:24

> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

Hebrews 13:4

> Everyone should honor marriage, and the marriage bed should be kept pure, because God will judge those who commit sexual sin and adultery.

Proverbs 5:18

> May your fountain be blessed. Find joy in the wife you married when you were young.

Spiritual Principle

Marriage is God's good and holy setting for sexual love.

Key Truth

God does not deny human desire.

He gives it a safe and holy home.

III. MARITAL RIGHTS

1 Corinthians 7:3 — A Mutual Responsibility

“The husband should give to his wife her marital rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.”

Some in Corinth were saying that married couples should stop having relations in order to be more spiritual.

Paul says no.

Husbands and wives owe each other the gift of physical intimacy.

Notice how balanced this is.

The husband to his wife.

Likewise the wife to her husband.

In the ancient world, wives were often treated as property.

Paul's teaching was revolutionary.

He says the wife's needs matter just as much as the husband's.

This is not about demanding.

It is about giving.

Cross References

Exodus 21:10

> If he marries another woman, he must not take away the first one's food, clothing, or marriage rights.

Ephesians 5:25

> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

1 Peter 3:7

> In the same way, husbands, live with your wives with understanding. Treat them with honor as the more delicate partner and as those who share with you the gift of life. Then nothing will stand in the way of your prayers.

Spiritual Principle

In marriage, love focuses on giving to the other, not on taking for oneself.

Application

Husbands and wives should ask, **“How can I care for my spouse?”**

Not, **“What can I get from my spouse?”**

IV. BELONGING TO EACH OTHER

1 Corinthians 7:4 — Authority Shared in Love

“The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”

Paul explains why husbands and wives owe each other intimacy.

In marriage, they belong to each other.

The wife's body belongs to her husband.

And just as truly, the husband's body belongs to his wife.

This was a startling statement in Paul's world.

Many people would have agreed with the first half.

Few would have said the second half.

Paul places husband and wife on equal footing here.

This verse must be read with the rest of Scripture.

It never gives anyone permission to force, pressure, or mistreat a spouse.

Husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

Belonging to each other means giving yourself freely in love.

Cross References

Genesis 2:24

> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

Ephesians 5:21

> Submit to one another out of respect for Christ.

Malachi 2:14

> You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife you married when you were young. You have been unfaithful to her, even though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

Spiritual Principle

In marriage, two people give themselves completely to each other.

Key Truth

Marriage is not two people living side by side.

It is two people who have become one.

V. DO NOT DEPRIVE ONE ANOTHER

1 Corinthians 7:5 — Except for Prayer, and Only for a Time

“Do not deprive one another, except by agreement for a limited time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Paul gives a clear command.

“Do not deprive one another.”

He allows one exception, with three conditions.

By agreement. Both must agree. One spouse may not decide alone.

For a limited time. It must not go on and on.

So that you may devote yourselves to prayer. It must have a spiritual purpose.

Then they must **“come together again.”**

Why?

“So that Satan may not tempt you.”

Satan looks for openings.

Long periods of separation within marriage can become an opening for temptation.

Paul is realistic about human weakness.

Cross References

Joel 2:16

> Gather the people. Make the assembly holy. Bring together the elders, the children, and even the nursing babies. Let the groom leave his room and the bride her chamber.

1 Thessalonians 3:5

> That is why, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid the tempter had tempted you in some way and our work had been wasted.

Exodus 19:15

> Then he said to the people, “Be ready by the third day. Do not have sexual relations with a woman.”

Spiritual Principle

A healthy marriage protects both spouses from temptation.

Application

Guard your marriage.

Do not give the enemy an open door.

VI. A CONCESSION, NOT A COMMAND

1 Corinthians 7:6 — Paul's Careful Words

“I say this as a concession, not as a command.”

What does **“this”** refer to?

Most likely, Paul means the permission to set aside time apart for prayer in verse 5.

He allows it.

But he does not command it.

Paul is careful not to turn a permission into a rule.

The Corinthians were tempted to make spiritual rules that God had not made.

Paul refuses to do that.

Some things God commands.

Some things God permits.

Wise believers know the difference.

Cross References

Romans 14:5

> One person thinks one day is more sacred than another. Another person thinks every day is the same. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

2 Corinthians 8:8

> I am not giving you a command. I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of others.

Philemon 1:14

> But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any good you do would not be forced but would come from your own free will.

Spiritual Principle

We must not turn what God permits into something God requires.

Key Truth

God's word gives commands and freedoms.

Both must be respected.

VII. EACH HAS HIS OWN GIFT

1 Corinthians 7:7 — The Gift of Singleness and the Gift of Marriage

“I wish that all were as I am. But each has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.”

Paul shares his personal wish.

“I wish that all were as I am.”

Paul was single.

And he found that singleness allowed him to serve the Lord freely.

But he immediately adds:

“Each has his own gift from God.”

Singleness is a gift.

Marriage is also a gift.

God gives different gifts to different people.

Neither one is a lesser gift.

The single person should not envy the married.

The married person should not look down on the single.

Each should use the gift God has given for His glory.

Cross References

Matthew 19:11

> Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it has been given.”

Romans 12:6

> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

1 Peter 4:10

> Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

Spiritual Principle

Singleness and marriage are both gifts from God to be used for His glory.

Application

Whatever your situation right now, ask God how you can serve Him in it.

VIII. TO THE UNMARRIED AND THE WIDOWS

1 Corinthians 7:8 — Good to Remain as Paul Is

“To the unmarried and the widows I say: it is good for them to remain unmarried, as I am.”

Paul now speaks to two groups.

The unmarried—this may include those who were never married or those whose marriages had ended.

The widows—women whose husbands had died.

Paul says it is **“good”** for them to remain unmarried.

Notice he says **good**, not **required.**

Paul gives his reasons later in the chapter.

An unmarried person has more freedom to focus on the Lord's work.

And times were difficult.

Paul's own life was an example.

He was free to travel, suffer, and serve without the responsibilities of a family.

Cross References

Matthew 19:12

> Some are unable to marry because they were born that way. Some were made that way by others. And some have chosen not to marry for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this should accept it.

1 Timothy 5:14

> So I want younger widows to marry, have children, manage their homes, and give the enemy no opportunity to speak badly of us.

1 Corinthians 7:40

> But in my opinion she is happier if she stays as she is. And I think I also have the Spirit of God.

Spiritual Principle

Singleness can be a season of great freedom to serve the Lord.

Key Truth

Being unmarried is not being incomplete.

In Christ, every believer is complete.

IX. BETTER TO MARRY

1 Corinthians 7:9 — Than to Burn with Passion

“But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”

Paul is realistic.

Not everyone has the gift of singleness.

If a person struggles to control sexual desire, they **“should marry.”**

There is no shame in this.

“It is better to marry than to burn with passion.”

To **burn with passion** means to be consumed by constant sexual desire.

Living that way puts a person in danger of falling into sin.

God's answer is not to ignore the desire.

It is to fulfill it in the right way—in marriage.

Cross References

1 Timothy 5:14

> So I want younger widows to marry, have children, manage their homes, and give the enemy no opportunity to speak badly of us.

Proverbs 5:19

> She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her love satisfy you at all times. Always be delighted by her love.

Genesis 2:18

> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.”

Spiritual Principle

God gives marriage as a good and honorable answer to the desire for intimacy.

Application

If you long to be married, that desire is not wrong.

Pray, wait on God, and keep yourself pure.

X. A COMMAND FROM THE LORD

1 Corinthians 7:10 — A Wife Must Not Separate

“To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.”

Paul now speaks to married believers.

And he makes a point of saying where this command comes from:

“Not I, but the Lord.”

Jesus Himself taught about this during His earthly ministry.

Jesus said, **“What God has joined together, let no one separate.”**

So Paul repeats the Lord's teaching.

“A wife must not separate from her husband.”

Some in Corinth may have thought that leaving a marriage would make them more spiritual.

Paul says no.

Marriage is meant to be lifelong.

God's design is for husband and wife to stay together.

Cross References

Matthew 19:6

> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

Mark 10:9

> Therefore what God has joined together, no one should separate.

Malachi 2:16

> “I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel. “I hate it when a man covers himself with violence. So guard your heart and do not be unfaithful.”

Spiritual Principle

Marriage is a lifelong covenant made before God.

Key Truth

God joins a husband and wife together.

That is why their marriage must be treated as sacred.

XI. REMAIN UNMARRIED OR BE RECONCILED

1 Corinthians 7:11 — The Door to Reconciliation

“But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.”

Paul knows that separation sometimes happens.

If it does, the wife has two options.

Remain unmarried.

Or be reconciled to her husband.

Paul leaves the door open for reconciliation.

The goal is always restoration of the marriage if possible.

Then Paul gives the same command to husbands:

“A husband must not divorce his wife.”

In Jewish culture, it was often easy for men to divorce their wives.

Paul holds husbands and wives to the same standard.

Jesus did give one exception for sexual unfaithfulness, as Matthew records.

Paul does not repeat it here, but he does not deny it.

His point is that believers must not treat divorce as a casual option.

Cross References

Mark 10:11

> He told them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.”

Matthew 5:32

> But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Malachi 2:16

> “I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel. “I hate it when a man covers himself with violence. So guard your heart and do not be unfaithful.”

Spiritual Principle

When a marriage is broken, the first hope should be reconciliation.

Application

If your marriage is struggling, seek help early.

Pray, get godly counsel, and work toward healing.

XII. A BELIEVER WITH AN UNBELIEVING WIFE

1 Corinthians 7:12 — “I, Not the Lord”

“To the rest I say (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer, and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.”

Paul now addresses a new situation.

“To the rest.”

These were couples where one spouse had become a believer and the other had not.

Paul says, **“I, not the Lord.”**

He does not mean his words are less true.

He means Jesus did not speak directly to this situation during His earthly ministry.

So Paul speaks as an apostle guided by the Spirit.

Some believers in Corinth may have worried that being married to an unbeliever was sinful.

They may have remembered how Israel was told to separate from foreign wives in the days of Ezra.

Paul says:

If the unbelieving wife is willing to stay, the believing husband must not divorce her.

Becoming a Christian is not a reason to leave a marriage.

Cross References

Ezra 10:2

> Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, from the family of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But even so, there is still hope for Israel.”

Nehemiah 13:23

> In those days I also saw Jewish men who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

2 Corinthians 6:14

> Do not team up with unbelievers. What does goodness have in common with evil? What does light have in common with darkness?

Spiritual Principle

Coming to faith is not a reason to leave a marriage.

Key Truth

God can use a faithful believer to bring light into a home.

XIII. A BELIEVER WITH AN UNBELIEVING HUSBAND

1 Corinthians 7:13 — She Must Not Divorce Him

“And if any woman has a husband who is not a believer, and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.”

Paul gives the same instruction to believing wives.

If her unbelieving husband is willing to stay, she must not divorce him.

In the ancient world, this would have been especially hard.

A wife was usually expected to follow her husband's religion.

A wife who became a Christian while her husband did not was taking a bold step of faith.

Paul tells her to stay, to live faithfully, and to trust God with her husband's heart.

Cross References

Ezra 10:2

> Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, from the family of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But even so, there is still hope for Israel.”

1 Peter 3:1

> In the same way, wives, submit to your husbands. Then if any of them do not believe God's word, they may be won over without words by the way their wives live,

2 Corinthians 6:14

> Do not team up with unbelievers. What does goodness have in common with evil? What does light have in common with darkness?

Spiritual Principle

A faithful life can be a powerful witness inside a home.

Application

If you are married to an unbeliever, keep loving, keep praying, and keep living for Christ.

XIV. SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE BELIEVER

1 Corinthians 7:14 — Your Children Are Holy

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”

Paul explains why the believer should stay.

Some feared that being married to an unbeliever would make them unclean.

Paul says the opposite is true.

The believer's holiness has an influence on the home.

“The unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife.”

This does not mean he is saved because his wife is a believer.

Each person must trust Christ for himself.

It means the unbelieving spouse is placed in a special position of blessing.

He lives under the influence of God's grace through his believing wife.

The same is true of the children.

“As it is, they are holy.”

Children in a home with a believing parent are set apart in a special way.

They grow up near God's word, God's people, and God's grace.

Cross References

Malachi 2:15

> Didn't the LORD make them one? In body and spirit they belong to Him. And why one? Because He was looking for godly children. So guard your heart, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.

Genesis 17:7

> I will keep My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for all generations. It will be a covenant that lasts forever: I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

Romans 11:16

> If the first part of the dough offered to God is holy, then the whole batch is holy. If the root is holy, so are the branches.

Spiritual Principle

One faithful believer can bring God's blessing into an entire household.

Key Truth

The holiness of the believer is stronger than the uncleanness of the unbeliever.

XV. IF THE UNBELIEVER DEPARTS

1 Corinthians 7:15 — Called to Live in Peace

“But if the unbeliever departs, let them do so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such cases. God has called us to live in peace.”

Paul now addresses a harder situation.

What if the unbeliever does not want to stay?

“Let them do so.”

The believer should not try to force the unbelieving spouse to remain.

“The brother or the sister is not bound in such cases.”

The believer is no longer tied to the marriage.

Bible students understand this in different ways.

Many believe it means the believer is free to remarry.

Others believe it means the believer is free from the obligation to keep the marriage together, but should remain single.

Either way, the believer is not to blame for the departure.

“God has called us to live in peace.”

The believer should not live in constant conflict, fighting to hold on to someone who has chosen to leave.

Cross References

Romans 12:18

> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Matthew 10:14

> If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town.

Romans 14:19

> So let us work hard at doing what brings peace and what helps one another grow.

Spiritual Principle

God calls His people to peace, even in painful circumstances they cannot control.

Key Truth

You are responsible for your own faithfulness.

You are not responsible for another person's choice to leave.

XVI. HOW DO YOU KNOW?

1 Corinthians 7:16 — The Hope of Salvation

“For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”

This verse can be read in two ways.

Some read it as a word of **hope.**

Stay in the marriage, because you never know—your spouse might come to faith through you.

Others read it as a word of **release.**

Do not hold on to a departing spouse just because you hope to save them, because you cannot be sure that will happen.

Both readings contain truth.

God does use believing spouses to lead their partners to Christ.

But salvation is God's work, not ours.

We are called to be faithful witnesses and to leave the results to Him.

Cross References

1 Peter 3:1

> In the same way, wives, submit to your husbands. Then if any of them do not believe God's word, they may be won over without words by the way their wives live,

James 5:20

> remember this: Whoever turns a sinner back from the wrong path will save that person from death and cover a great number of sins.

1 Timothy 4:16

> Pay close attention to your life and your teaching. Keep doing these things, because if you do, you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

Spiritual Principle

We are called to be faithful witnesses, but only God can save.

Application

Keep praying for the unbelievers you love.

Leave the results in God's hands.

XVII. LIVE THE LIFE THE LORD ASSIGNED

1 Corinthians 7:17 — The Rule in All the Churches

“Nevertheless, each one should live the life the Lord has assigned him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.”

Paul now steps back and gives a general principle.

“Each one should live the life the Lord has assigned him.”

When God calls a person to faith, He calls them where they are.

Married or single.

Jew or Gentile.

Slave or free.

Becoming a Christian does not mean you must immediately change your whole situation.

It means you now live in that situation for the Lord.

Paul says this was **“the rule I lay down in all the churches.”**

This was not special advice for Corinth.

It was Paul's teaching everywhere.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 3:5

> What, after all, is Apollos? What is Paul? We are only servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord gave each of us our work.

Ephesians 4:1

> So I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Romans 12:3

> Because of the grace given to me, I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. Instead, think about yourself with clear judgment, according to the measure of faith God has given you.

Spiritual Principle

God calls us to serve Him faithfully right where we are.

Key Truth

You do not need a different life to follow Christ.

You need Christ in the life you have.

XVIII. CIRCUMCISED OR UNCIRCUMCISED

1 Corinthians 7:18 — Stay as You Were Called

“Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.”

Paul gives his first example.

Circumcision was the sign of being Jewish.

Some Jewish believers living among Greeks were embarrassed by it.

In that time, some even tried to hide or reverse the mark.

Paul says, **“Don't.”**

Some Gentile believers were being told they had to be circumcised to be truly saved.

Paul says, **“Don't.”**

A Jew does not need to stop being Jewish to follow Christ.

A Gentile does not need to become Jewish to follow Christ.

God accepts both through faith in Jesus.

Cross References

Galatians 5:6

> For in Christ Jesus, being circumcised or not circumcised does not matter. What matters is faith working through love.

Acts 15:1

> Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised as Moses taught, you cannot be saved.”

Galatians 6:15

> Being circumcised or not circumcised means nothing. What matters is being a new creation.

Spiritual Principle

Our standing with God does not depend on our background, but on our faith in Christ.

XIX. KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDS

1 Corinthians 7:19 — What Really Counts

“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.”

This is a surprising statement from a Jewish man.

Circumcision was commanded in the Law of Moses.

Yet Paul says, **“Circumcision is nothing.”**

He means it is nothing for salvation.

It does not make a person right with God.

And neither does being uncircumcised.

“Keeping God's commands is what counts.”

What matters is a life of obedience that flows from faith and love.

Outward marks do not change the heart.

A changed heart shows itself in obedience.

Cross References

Galatians 5:6

> For in Christ Jesus, being circumcised or not circumcised does not matter. What matters is faith working through love.

Galatians 6:15

> Being circumcised or not circumcised means nothing. What matters is being a new creation.

John 14:15

> If you love Me, you will obey My commands.

Spiritual Principle

God cares more about obedience from the heart than about outward religious marks.

Application

Do not rest on religious labels or rituals.

Show your faith by loving obedience.

XX. REMAIN IN YOUR SITUATION

1 Corinthians 7:20 — Called Where You Were

“Each one should remain in the situation in which he was when God called him.”

Paul repeats the principle.

“Each one should remain in the situation in which he was when God called him.”

This does not mean Christians can never change jobs, move, marry, or improve their lives.

Paul himself will say in the next verse that a slave should take freedom if he can.

The point is this:

Your situation is not a barrier to serving God.

You do not need to escape your circumstances to be a faithful Christian.

God called you there, and you can glorify Him there.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:1

> So I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Philippians 4:11

> I am not saying this because I am in need. I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in.

1 Timothy 6:6

> But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Spiritual Principle

Contentment in Christ frees us from thinking we must change our circumstances to be faithful.

Key Truth

The place God called you is a place where you can serve Him.

XXI. WERE YOU A SLAVE?

1 Corinthians 7:21 — Do Not Let It Trouble You

“Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.”

Paul's second example is slavery.

Slavery was common in the Roman world.

Many members of the church in Corinth were slaves.

Slavery in that time took many forms and was not based on race.

Some slaves were laborers.

Others were teachers, doctors, and household managers.

Some could earn their freedom.

But it was still a system of ownership over human beings.

Paul says to the believing slave:

“Do not let it trouble you.”

Your position in society does not change your position in Christ.

You are fully accepted by God.

Then he adds:

“If you can gain your freedom, do so.”

Freedom is better.

Paul does not praise slavery.

The gospel planted seeds that would eventually work against it—treating every person as equal before God and as a brother or sister in Christ.

Cross References

Ephesians 6:5

> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, with a sincere heart, as you would obey Christ.

Philemon 1:16

> no longer as a slave, but more than a slave—as a dear brother. He is very dear to me, and even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

Colossians 3:22

> Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything. Do it not only when they are watching, to win their approval, but with a sincere heart, out of respect for the Lord.

Spiritual Principle

Your worth before God does not depend on your status in the world.

Key Truth

The gospel gave dignity to people the world treated as property.

XXII. THE LORD'S FREEDMAN AND CHRIST'S SLAVE

1 Corinthians 7:22 — A Great Reversal

“For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave.”

Paul turns the world's categories upside down.

The slave who comes to Christ is **“the Lord's freedman.”**

He has been set free from sin, guilt, and death.

In the deepest way, he is free.

The free person who comes to Christ is **“Christ's slave.”**

He now belongs completely to Jesus.

He is under a new Master.

In Christ, the slave and the free person stand on the same level.

Both are free.

Both belong to Christ.

Cross References

John 8:36

> So if the Son sets you free, you will be truly free.

Galatians 5:1

> Christ has set us free so that we can live in freedom. So stand firm, and do not let yourselves be held again under slavery.

Romans 6:22

> But now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God. What you get from this is a holy life, and the result is eternal life.

Spiritual Principle

In Christ, every believer is both truly free and fully owned by the Lord.

Key Truth

The greatest freedom is to belong to Jesus.

XXIII. BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

1 Corinthians 7:23 — Do Not Become Slaves of Men

“You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.”

Paul repeats the words he used in Chapter 6.

“You were bought with a price.”

Jesus paid for every believer with His own blood.

So every believer belongs to Him.

“Do not become slaves of men.”

This may include not selling yourself into slavery, which some people did to pay debts.

But it also has a deeper meaning.

Do not let people control your heart, your conscience, or your life.

Do not live for human approval.

Do not become enslaved to human opinions or human rules.

You belong to Christ.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 6:20

> for you were bought with a price. So honor God with your body.

1 Peter 1:18

> For you know that you were rescued from the empty way of life handed down from your ancestors. And you were not rescued with things that perish, like silver or gold—

Galatians 5:1

> Christ has set us free so that we can live in freedom. So stand firm, and do not let yourselves be held again under slavery.

Spiritual Principle

Those who belong to Christ must not be ruled by people.

Application

Whose approval controls you?

Remember who paid for you.

XXIV. REMAIN WITH GOD

1 Corinthians 7:24 — Wherever You Were Called

“Brothers and sisters, each one should remain with God in the condition they were in when called.”

Paul repeats the principle a third time.

But this time he adds two important words:

“With God.”

The point is not just to stay where you are.

It is to stay where you are **with God.**

His presence makes any situation a place of purpose.

A slave with God is richer than a king without Him.

A single person with God is never alone.

A married person with God has a holy calling in the home.

Cross References

Philippians 4:11

> I am not saying this because I am in need. I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in.

1 Timothy 6:8

> If we have food and clothing, we will be satisfied with that.

1 Timothy 6:6

> But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Spiritual Principle

God's presence turns any situation into a place of calling.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Where you are matters less than who you are with.

XXV. CONCERNING VIRGINS

1 Corinthians 7:25 — A Trustworthy Judgment

“Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.”

Paul turns to another question from the Corinthians' letter.

“Now about virgins.”

This refers to unmarried young people, especially those who were engaged or thinking about marriage.

Paul says, **“I have no command from the Lord.”**

Jesus had not given direct teaching about this.

So Paul gives **“a judgment”**—his wise counsel.

And he gives it **“as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.”**

Paul's trustworthiness was not his own achievement.

It came from God's mercy.

Paul remembered that he had once persecuted the church.

Only mercy had made him a faithful servant.

Cross References

1 Timothy 1:13

> even though I once spoke against God, persecuted His people, and treated them with violence. But God showed me mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

1 Corinthians 4:2

> Now it is required that those who are trusted with something must prove faithful.

2 Corinthians 8:8

> I am not giving you a command. I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of others.

Spiritual Principle

Wise counsel from a faithful servant of God is worth listening to.

Key Truth

Paul's trustworthiness came from mercy, not merit.

XXVI. THE PRESENT CRISIS

1 Corinthians 7:26 — Good to Remain as You Are

“Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is.”

Paul gives his reason for advising people to stay as they are.

“The present crisis.”

Bible students are not sure exactly what Paul meant.

Some believe there was a particular hardship in Corinth at the time, such as famine or persecution.

Others believe Paul is speaking about the pressures that come with living in the last days before Christ returns.

Either way, Paul believed times were hard.

In difficult times, adding the responsibilities of marriage and family could make life even harder.

So he advises people to remain as they are.

This is wisdom for a particular time, not a rule for all times.

Cross References

Luke 21:23

> How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant or nursing! There will be great distress in the land and anger against this people.

Matthew 24:19

> How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant or nursing!

1 Peter 4:7

> The end of all things is near. So be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

Spiritual Principle

Wise decisions take into account the times we are living in.

Application

Before making big life decisions, ask God for wisdom about the season you are in.

XXVII. PLEDGED OR FREE

1 Corinthians 7:27 — Do Not Seek a Change

“Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife.”

Paul applies his principle to two kinds of people.

“Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released.”

If you have made a commitment, keep it.

“Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife.”

If you are free, there is no need to rush into a commitment, especially in a time of crisis.

Paul's counsel is the same as before.

Stay where you are.

Keep your promises.

Do not make major changes out of restlessness.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 24:1

> Suppose a man marries a woman, and later she no longer pleases him because he has found something shameful about her. He writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her, and sends her away from his house.

Matthew 19:6

> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

Romans 7:2

> For example, a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law that bound her to him.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness to commitments is a mark of a godly life.

Key Truth

God values promises kept.

XXVIII. MARRIAGE IS NOT SIN

1 Corinthians 7:28 — But There Will Be Troubles

“But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.”

Paul makes something very clear.

“If you do marry, you have not sinned.”

Paul does not want anyone to think that marriage is wrong.

It is good.

It is honorable.

It is God's design.

But Paul is also honest.

“Those who marry will face many troubles in this life.”

Marriage brings joy.

It also brings challenges, responsibilities, and burdens.

In a time of crisis, those burdens can be heavy.

Paul says, **“I want to spare you this.”**

His advice comes from care, not from rules.

Cross References

Hebrews 13:4

> Everyone should honor marriage, and the marriage bed should be kept pure, because God will judge those who commit sexual sin and adultery.

Genesis 2:24

> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

John 16:33

> I have told you these things so that you may have peace in Me. In this world you will have trouble. But take courage! I have overcome the world.

Spiritual Principle

Marriage is good, but it is not free of hardship.

Application

Enter marriage with joy and with open eyes.

Count the cost and trust God for strength.

XXIX. THE TIME IS SHORT

1 Corinthians 7:29 — Living as If Not

“What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not;”

Paul now gives the big picture behind his advice.

“The time is short.”

The word Paul uses pictures time that has been compressed or shortened.

Since Christ came, the world has entered its final age.

His return could come at any time.

This changes how believers should live.

“Those who have wives should live as if they do not.”

Paul does not mean husbands should ignore their wives.

He has already told them to care for their spouses.

He means that marriage must not become the center of a person's life.

Even the best earthly relationships are temporary.

Christ must come first.

Cross References

Romans 13:11

> Do this because you know what time it is. It is time to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

1 Peter 4:7

> The end of all things is near. So be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

James 4:14

> You don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears.

Spiritual Principle

Even good things must not take the place that belongs to Christ.

Key Truth

Marriage is for this life.

Christ is forever.

XXX. AS IF THEY DID NOT

1 Corinthians 7:30 — Mourning, Rejoicing, Buying

“those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep;”

Paul continues the list.

Those who mourn, as if they did not.

Sorrow is real, but it is not final.

Believers grieve with hope.

Those who are happy, as if they were not.

Joy in this world is good, but it is not the deepest joy.

It must not hold our hearts too tightly.

Those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep.

Everything we own is temporary.

We are managers, not permanent owners.

Paul is not telling believers to stop feeling or stop living.

He is telling them to hold earthly things loosely.

Cross References

Philippians 4:11

> I am not saying this because I am in need. I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in.

James 4:14

> You don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears.

Psalm 39:6

> People walk around like shadows. They rush about, but it means nothing. They pile up riches but do not know who will get them.

Spiritual Principle

Hold the things of this world with an open hand.

Application

Enjoy God's good gifts.

But do not let them own you.

XXXI. THIS WORLD IS PASSING AWAY

1 Corinthians 7:31 — Not Engrossed in It

“those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.”

Paul finishes the thought.

“Those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them.”

Believers must use the things of this world.

We need food, homes, jobs, and money.

But we must not be **engrossed**—completely absorbed—in them.

Then Paul gives the reason:

“For this world in its present form is passing away.”

The word for **“present form”** was used for the scenes in a play.

The scenery of this world is changing.

The curtain will soon fall.

Everything we see is temporary.

Only what is done for God will last.

Cross References

1 John 2:17

> The world and its desires are passing away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

2 Peter 3:10

> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be exposed.

Matthew 6:19

> Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moths and rust destroy them and where thieves break in and steal.

Spiritual Principle

Live with eternity in view, because this world is passing away.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Use the world, but do not let the world use you.

XXXII. FREE FROM CONCERN

1 Corinthians 7:32 — The Unmarried Man and the Lord's Affairs

“I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs— how he can please the Lord.”

Paul now explains another reason for his advice.

“I would like you to be free from concern.”

Paul wants believers to be free from distracting worries.

Then he describes the unmarried man.

“An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord.”

A single person often has more time and freedom to focus on serving God.

He can give his energy to ministry, prayer, and the needs of others.

This is the great advantage of singleness.

Cross References

Luke 10:41

> The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things.”

Philippians 4:6

> Don't worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.

Matthew 6:25

> That is why I tell you not to worry about your life—what you will eat or drink—or about your body—what you will wear. Isn't life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Spiritual Principle

Singleness can give special freedom to focus on pleasing the Lord.

Application

If you are single, use this season to serve God wholeheartedly.

XXXIII. THE MARRIED MAN

1 Corinthians 7:33 — Concerned to Please His Wife

“But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—”

Paul now describes the married man.

He is **“concerned about the affairs of this world.”**

This is not a criticism.

A married man should care about providing for his family.

He should care about pleasing his wife.

God expects him to do so.

But it means his time and attention are shared.

He cannot give himself to ministry in the same way a single man can.

Paul is simply describing reality.

Cross References

Luke 14:20

> Another said, “I just got married, so I can't come.”

Ephesians 5:28

> In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself.

1 Timothy 5:8

> Anyone who does not take care of his relatives, especially his own family, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Spiritual Principle

Caring for one's family is a God-given responsibility.

Key Truth

A married believer serves the Lord by loving and caring for his family.

XXXIV. DIVIDED INTERESTS

1 Corinthians 7:34 — Devoted in Body and Spirit

“and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband.”

Paul continues.

“His interests are divided.”

The married man must balance his devotion to the Lord with his responsibilities at home.

Then Paul applies the same truth to women.

The unmarried woman is free to focus on **“the Lord's affairs.”**

Her aim is to be **“devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit.”**

The married woman is concerned with pleasing her husband.

Again, this is not wrong.

It is part of her calling in marriage.

Paul treats men and women equally here.

Both single men and single women have the same opportunity for undivided devotion.

Both married men and married women have the same responsibility to care for their spouses.

Cross References

Luke 10:39

> She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what He taught.

Philippians 4:6

> Don't worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.

1 Timothy 5:5

> A widow who is truly in need and left all alone puts her hope in God. She keeps praying and asking God for help night and day.

Spiritual Principle

Whether married or single, every believer is called to devotion to the Lord.

Key Truth

Single women have a valuable and honored place in God's work.

XXXV. UNDIVIDED DEVOTION

1 Corinthians 7:35 — For Your Own Good

“I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”

Paul explains his motive.

“For your own good.”

He is not trying to burden them.

“Not to restrict you.”

The word pictures throwing a noose around someone.

Paul is not trying to trap anyone or take away their freedom.

His goal is clear:

“That you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”

This is the heart of the whole chapter.

Married or single, the goal is the same.

A life devoted to the Lord.

Cross References

Colossians 3:2

> Set your minds on the things above, not on earthly things.

Luke 10:42

> But only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.

Matthew 6:33

> But seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Spiritual Principle

The goal of every Christian life is undivided devotion to the Lord.

Application

What divides your heart?

Ask God to help you seek Him first.

XXXVI. IF HE FEELS HE OUGHT TO MARRY

1 Corinthians 7:36 — They Should Marry

“If anyone is worried that he is not acting honorably 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 marry.”

Paul now speaks to engaged couples.

This passage has been understood in different ways.

Some believe Paul is speaking about a father deciding whether to give his daughter in marriage.

The Crawford Standard Bible understands it as an engaged man and his fiancée.

Some engaged men in Corinth may have been holding back from marriage because they thought it was more spiritual to stay single.

But Paul says if the man feels he is not treating his fiancée **“honorably”**—

If she is **“getting along in years”**—

If he **“feels he ought to marry”**—

“He should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should marry.”

Paul gives full freedom to marry.

Delaying marriage out of a false idea of holiness is not required.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 22:28

> If a man meets a young woman who is a virgin and not engaged, takes hold of her, and sleeps with her, and they are found out,

Genesis 29:21

> Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is up, and I want to marry her.”

1 Timothy 5:8

> Anyone who does not take care of his relatives, especially his own family, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Spiritual Principle

Marriage entered in honor before God is right and good.

Key Truth

It is no sin to marry.

XXXVII. SETTLED IN HIS OWN MIND

1 Corinthians 7:37 — He Also Does the Right Thing

“But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his will, and has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing.”

Paul now describes the other choice.

Some men may decide not to marry.

Paul gives four conditions.

He has settled the matter in his own mind. He is firm in his decision.

He is under no compulsion. No one is forcing him, and he is not driven by uncontrolled desire.

He has control over his will. He has the self-control to remain single.

He has made up his mind. He has chosen freely.

If all this is true:

“This man also does the right thing.”

Both choices can honor God.

Cross References

Numbers 30:2

> When a man makes a promise to the LORD or swears an oath to bind himself, he must not break his word. He must do everything he said.

Ecclesiastes 5:4

> When you make a promise to God, do not delay in keeping it. He takes no pleasure in fools. Keep your promise.

Psalm 15:4

> He looks down on the wicked but honors those who respect the LORD. He keeps his promise even when it costs him.

Spiritual Principle

A decision made freely, with self-control, before God, can honor Him whether it leads to marriage or singleness.

XXXVIII. RIGHT AND EVEN BETTER

1 Corinthians 7:38 — Two Good Choices

“So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.”

Paul sums up his counsel.

“He who marries does right.”

Marriage is not second-class.

“He who does not marry does even better.”

Paul says this because of the present crisis and the freedom singleness gives for undivided service.

He is not saying that single people are better people.

He is saying that, in that situation, singleness had practical advantages for serving the Lord.

Both choices are good.

Neither is sinful.

Cross References

Genesis 2:24

> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

Matthew 19:11

> Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it has been given.”

Proverbs 18:22

The man who finds a wife finds something good and receives favor from the LORD.

Spiritual Principle

God gives His people freedom to choose between good options.

Key Truth

The question is not, **"Which choice is holy?"**

The question is, **"How can I best serve the Lord?"**

XXXIX. BOUND AS LONG AS HE LIVES

1 Corinthians 7:39 — Free to Marry in the Lord

"A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord."

Paul ends with a word to widows.

"A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives."

Marriage is meant to last for life.

"But if her husband dies, she is free to marry."

Death ends the marriage covenant.

A widow is free to marry again.

And she may marry **"anyone she wishes."**

Paul gives her real freedom of choice.

But there is one condition:

"He must belong to the Lord."

A believer should marry only another believer.

This is wise and loving counsel.

Marriage is the closest of all human partnerships.

It works best when both share the same Lord.

Cross References

Romans 7:2

> For example, a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law that bound her to him.

Romans 7:3

> So if she marries another man while her husband is alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and she is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

2 Corinthians 6:14

> Do not team up with unbelievers. What does goodness have in common with evil? What does light have in common with darkness?

Spiritual Principle

Believers should marry only those who belong to the Lord.

Application

If you are single and hope to marry, make a shared faith in Christ your first requirement.

XL. HAPPIER AS SHE IS

1 Corinthians 7:40 — "I Think That I Too Have the Spirit of God"

"In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God."

Paul gives his final opinion.

"She is happier if she stays as she is."

For the reasons he has already given, Paul believes a widow may find greater freedom and joy in remaining single.

But notice he says **"in my judgment."**

This is counsel, not command.

Then Paul adds a gentle but pointed statement:

"I think that I too have the Spirit of God."

Some in Corinth claimed to be especially spiritual.

Paul reminds them that he also speaks by the Spirit of God.

His counsel was not merely human opinion.

It came from a heart guided by God's Spirit.

Cross References

Romans 8:9

> But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

1 Corinthians 14:37

> If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him recognize that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

1 Thessalonians 4:8

> So anyone who rejects this teaching is not rejecting a human being, but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

Counsel given by the Spirit through God's word deserves careful attention.

Key Truth

Whether married, single, or widowed, the believer can find true happiness in the Lord.

XLI. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 7

1. Marriage Is a Safeguard Against Immorality

Each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

Principle:

Husbands and wives belong to each other and must fulfill their responsibilities in love and faithfulness.

2. Singleness Is a Gift

Paul wished that all could be as he was.

Principle:

Some are called to remain single for the sake of undivided devotion to the Lord.

3. Marriage to Unbelievers

The believer should stay if the unbelieving spouse is willing.

Principle:

If the unbelieving partner leaves, the believer is not bound; God has called His children to peace.

4. Stay Faithful in Your Calling

Married, single, slave, or free—each should remain with God where he was called.

Principle:

God's command is to serve Him faithfully right where you are.

5. The World Is Passing Away

The time is short, and this world in its present form is passing away.

Principle:

Christians are to live with eternity in mind, not absorbed in worldly concerns.

6. Undivided Devotion to God

The unmarried can focus on the Lord's affairs.

Principle:

Singleness provides greater freedom to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

7. Marriage Is Honorable

“If you do marry, you have not sinned.”

Principle:

Both marriage and singleness are gifts, and each person must live according to the grace given them.

XLII. THE GIFTS OF MARRIAGE AND SINGLENESS

1 Corinthians 7 honors both marriage and singleness.

The Gift of Marriage

- Designed by God from the beginning.
- A safeguard against sexual sin.
- A covenant of mutual love and belonging.
- A place to care for and serve one another.
- An opportunity to bless children and unbelieving spouses.
- Brings joy, but also responsibilities and troubles.

The Gift of Singleness

- Modeled by Paul and by Jesus Himself.
- Free from the divided interests of family life.
- Allows undivided devotion to the Lord.
- Gives freedom to serve in hard times.
- Requires self-control.
- Is a gift, not a lesser calling.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The question is not whether marriage or singleness is better, but how you will serve the Lord with the gift you have been given.

XLIII. PAUL'S TEACHING ON DIVORCE

Verses 10–16 give important teaching on marriage and divorce.

For Two Believers

The Lord's command is to stay together.

If a separation happens, remain unmarried or be reconciled.

For a Believer Married to an Unbeliever

If the unbeliever is willing to stay, the believer must not divorce.

The believing spouse brings God's blessing into the home.

If the Unbeliever Leaves

The believer should let them go.

The believer is not bound in such cases.

God has called us to peace.

What Jesus Added

In Matthew, Jesus spoke of an exception for sexual unfaithfulness.

A Word About Safety

Paul is not addressing marriages where a spouse is in danger.

Scripture never requires anyone to remain in a place of abuse or harm.

Those in danger should seek safety and get help from church leaders and the proper authorities.

Key Truth

God's design is lifelong faithfulness, and His heart is always for reconciliation, peace, and the protection of the vulnerable.

XLIV. CONTENT WHERE GOD CALLED YOU

Verses 17–24 give one principle three times.

Verse 17

“Each one should live the life the Lord has assigned him.”

Verse 20

“Each one should remain in the situation in which he was when God called him.”

Verse 24

“Each one should remain with God in the condition they were in when called.”

Three Examples

- Married or single.
- Circumcised or uncircumcised.
- Slave or free.

What This Does Not Mean

It does not mean Christians can never change their situation.

Paul told slaves to gain their freedom if they could.

What This Does Mean

Your situation is not a barrier to serving God.

You can be faithful right where you are.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Contentment is not giving up on change; it is trusting God in the place He has put you.

XLV. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 7 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Taught About Marriage

“Not I, but the Lord.” Paul repeats Jesus' own teaching on marriage.

Jesus Bought Us with a Price

“You were bought with a price.”

Jesus Sets Slaves Free

The slave who believes is the Lord's freedman.

Jesus Is Our Master

The free person who believes is Christ's slave.

Jesus Deserves Undivided Devotion

The goal of every life is **“undivided devotion to the Lord.”**

Key Truth

Whether married or single, slave or free, every believer belongs to Christ and lives for Him.

XLVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Was Paul against marriage?

No.

He said that marriage is good, that marrying is not sin, and that husbands and wives should care for one another.

He also valued singleness and wanted people to understand its advantages.

Question 2

Why did Paul say each man should have his own wife?

Because of sexual temptation.

Marriage is God's good and holy place for sexual love.

Question 3

What does it mean that husbands and wives have authority over each other's bodies?

In marriage, husband and wife belong to each other equally.

This calls for giving in love, never for force or pressure.

Question 4

Is singleness a lesser calling?

No.

Paul calls singleness a gift.

It allows a person to serve the Lord with undivided devotion.

Question 5

What does Paul say to married believers?

They must not separate or divorce.

If a separation happens, they should remain unmarried or be reconciled.

Question 6

What should a believer do if married to an unbeliever?

Stay if the unbeliever is willing.

The believer's faith brings blessing into the home.

If the unbeliever leaves, the believer is not bound.

Question 7

What does it mean that the unbelieving spouse and children are “sanctified” or “holy”?

It does not mean they are automatically saved.

It means they are set apart in a special place of blessing because a believer is in the home.

Question 8

Does this chapter require someone to stay in a dangerous marriage?

No.

Paul is not addressing situations of abuse.

Anyone in danger should seek safety and get help from church leaders and the proper authorities.

Question 9

Why did Paul tell people to remain as they were when called?

Because a person's situation is not a barrier to serving God.

Faithfulness matters more than circumstances.

Question 10

Did Paul approve of slavery?

No.

He told slaves to take their freedom if they could.

He taught that in Christ slaves and free people are equal, and the gospel's teaching worked against slavery.

Question 11

What does “the time is short” mean?

Since Christ came, we are living in the last age before His return.

Believers should hold the things of this world loosely and live with eternity in mind.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 7 change about the way Christians live today?

1 Corinthians 7 should cause believers to live:

- Honoring marriage as God's good gift.
- Honoring singleness as God's good gift.
- Caring for their spouses with self-giving love.
- Keeping their commitments.
- Content and faithful where God has placed them.
- Free from slavery to human approval.
- Holding the things of this world loosely.
- With undivided devotion to the Lord.

XLVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 7 asks several important questions.

If I Am Married, Am I Caring for My Spouse?

Am I giving myself in love, or only looking out for myself?

If I Am Single, Am I Using My Freedom for the Lord?

Or am I wasting this season?

Do I See My Situation as a Gift?

Married or single, God has given me a gift to use.

Am I Keeping My Commitments?

Do I honor the promises I have made before God?

Am I Content Where God Has Placed Me?

Am I serving Him here, or always waiting for something else?

Am I Living for Human Approval?

I was bought with a price.

Am I Holding the World Too Tightly?

Is my heart absorbed in things that are passing away?

Is My Devotion to the Lord Divided?

What is pulling my heart away from Him?

XLVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Bloom Where God Has Planted You”

Many people believe they could serve God better if only their situation were different.

“If only I were married.”

“If only I were single.”

“If only I had a better job.”

“If only my spouse were a believer.”

“If only I were free.”

But Paul says something powerful.

God called you right where you are.

The slave could serve God as a slave.

The married could serve God in marriage.

The single could serve God in singleness.

The believer with an unbelieving spouse could be a light in that home.

God does not wait for perfect circumstances to use His people.

He uses them in the circumstances they have.

This creates a powerful principle.

Your situation is not your limitation.

It is your assignment.

Principle:

Remain with God where He has called you, and serve Him there with undivided devotion.

XLIX. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 was written to a church confused about marriage.

Some thought sex did not matter.

Some thought sex was unspiritual.

Some wanted to leave their marriages.

Some wanted to change everything about their lives once they became Christians.

Paul brought them back to balance.

Marriage is good.

Singleness is good.

Both are gifts.

Faithfulness matters more than circumstances.

And this world is passing away.

1 Corinthians 7 therefore reminds us:

Never despise marriage.

Never look down on singleness.

Never treat your marriage vows lightly.

Never think your situation keeps you from serving God.

Never let the passing things of this world capture your heart.

The church does not need people who are always waiting for a different life.

It needs:

Faithful husbands and wives.

Devoted single men and women.

Believers content in Christ.

And hearts fully given to the Lord.

The same truth still calls us:

Tell people that marriage is God's good gift.

Tell people that singleness is God's good gift.

Tell people that they were bought with a price.

Tell people that this world is passing away, but those who do God's will live forever.

And until He comes:

Love faithfully.

Serve wholeheartedly.

Remain with God.

Keep eternity in view.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the gift of marriage.

Thank You for the gift of singleness.

Thank You that You have given each of us our own gift from You.

Thank You that You called us right where we were.

Thank You that we were bought with a price and now belong to You.

Thank You that in Christ the slave is free and the free person belongs to the Lord.

Forgive us when we have treated marriage lightly.

Forgive us when we have looked down on those who are single.

Forgive us when we have been discontent with the life You assigned to us.

Forgive us when our hearts have been divided.

For those who are married, help them love one another with faithful, self-giving love.

For those who are single, help them use their freedom to serve You wholeheartedly.

For those married to unbelievers, give them grace to be a light in their homes.

For those who have been hurt in marriage, bring healing, safety, and peace.

For those who are widowed, be their comfort and their strength.

Teach us to hold the things of this world loosely.

Remind us that the time is short and this world is passing away.

Free us from living for the approval of people.

And give us undivided devotion to You.

“That you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.” — 1 Corinthians 7:35

Central Truth

Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God, and whatever our situation, we are called to live faithfully where God has placed us, with undivided devotion to the Lord, because this world is passing away.

1 Corinthians 7 in One Sentence

Paul teaches that marriage and singleness are both good gifts from God, calls husbands and wives to faithful, self-giving love and believers to remain with God wherever He called them, and urges all to live with undivided devotion to the Lord because this world in its present form is passing away.