

## “Marriage Matters” (1 Corinthians 7:6-24)

How many of you are single? How many of you wish you were married? How many of you are married? How many of you wish you were single? Don't raise your hands! Seriously, one of the biggest challenges in life is to be content in our stage of life. It has been well said, “Happiness is not having what you want. It is wanting what you have.”<sup>1</sup> Nowhere is this truer than singleness and marriage. God's desire and expectation is that you and I would be content in Christ, whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

The apostle Paul modeled godly contentment. In Phil 4:11, he wrote that he had “learned to be content in any circumstance” (NET). Amazingly, he penned these words from a Roman prison. Paul could say he was content in Christ even while he was suffering great hardship. Paul allowed Jesus Christ to transform his heart and mind and give him a supernatural perspective. Can you honestly say that you share Paul's perspective? Are you content in your singleness or marriage? If not, why are you not content? Could it be that you are seeking your own happiness? When it comes to issues pertaining to singleness, marriage, and divorce and remarriage, the question is not, “What will make me happiest?” but “What will make God happiest?”<sup>2</sup>

In 1 Cor 7:6-24, Paul will tell us that *God is happy when we are content*. Therefore, if you want to bring a smile to the face of God, cultivate contentment. As you do, you will find that contentment is one of the keys to Christianity. In this passage, Paul will lay out three directives that will help us to live a life of contentment.

**1. Consider marriage carefully (7:6-9).**<sup>3</sup> Paul expresses his preference that all Christians be single as he is. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that both marriage and singleness are viable options for the Christian.<sup>4</sup> In 7:6, Paul writes, “**But this I say by way of concession, not of command.**” Paul wants to make it clear that what he is about to say in 7:7-9 is a “concession” and not a “command.”<sup>5</sup> The word “concession” means “permission to do something.”<sup>6</sup> In 7:7-9 Paul explains his concession: “**Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried<sup>7</sup> and to widows<sup>8</sup> that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if<sup>9</sup> they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.**” Paul wishes that all Christians would remain single. He will explain later in this chapter that a single man or woman is able to be more devoted to Christ (7:32-34). He will also make it clear that his concession is based upon the “present distress” he will mention in 7:26<sup>10</sup> (most likely a famine).<sup>11</sup> In light of these factors, Paul believes that during this specific time, it is better not to marry. Yet, even during a time of crisis Paul is a realist and says, “...it is better to marry than to burn” with unfulfilled sexual passion (7:9).

As we reflect on these three verses, two principles rise to the surface. **First, celibacy is a spiritual gift and should be treated accordingly.**<sup>12</sup> In 7:7, Paul writes, “each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.” Those men and women who are able to be single have been gifted by the Lord to do so. It is unlikely that marriage is a gift, since it is a normal expression for humans.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, it should be treated as a gift. Thus, if you are single you should value your gift of singleness, and if you are married you ought to celebrate your marriage. This is God's express desire. Yet, often single people want to be married and married people want to be single. Our problem is a lack of contentment. We don't value God's gifts and timing. Consequently, we are always restless and dissatisfied. But it is worth recognizing that at some point in our lives each of us will be single. It may be before marriage or after marriage. Since 90% of all Americans will eventually marry, it is also likely that many people who are single will marry. God's call is for us to be content in Christ, whatever our circumstances. Remember, *God is happy when we are content*.

I believe most Christians reject the legitimacy of singleness. I am convinced that is the reason for so much hurt in the church regarding this issue. Directly or indirectly, subtly or not so subtly, we have ascribed to the conviction that singles are unfinished business. We say in groups and in private conversations, “Aren’t you married yet?” “What’s a nice girl like you doing unmarried?” “What you need is a good wife.” “Found anybody to date yet?” “I’m praying the Lord will lead you to a good guy.” “It’s too bad he’s not married.” Parents say that; relatives say that. Family reunions apparently are notorious for these and similar comments. Books and articles are written from a Christian viewpoint that say, “If you will only commit your life to Christ, God will give you a marriage partner.” Christ never said that. He said He will lead you to a life of meaning and purpose and fulfillment. He never said He would give you marriage. He’s more concerned about other things. We need to accept the legitimacy of singleness. Simple mathematics says there are more women than men in this world, and there always will be. We need to accept singleness because there are some people whose circumstances involve singleness, and they have no opportunity to change. Others prefer not to change. We need to accept the legitimacy of singleness primarily because the Bible does.<sup>14</sup>

***Second, marriage is to be encouraged not discouraged.*** In 7:9, Paul encourages singles to get married if they lack control and are burning. This desire is from God and is not meant to be inappropriately squelched. Often, I will be asked the question: When should our young people get married? I usually answer this question by explaining that at the time of the New Testament writings (and for hundreds of years afterward), marriage occurred closer to the age of puberty. Marriage permitted the blossoming sex drive to be fulfilled and not frustrated. Today, however, marriage is usually postponed until later in life due to modern educational, vocational, and financial pressures. The longer one postpones marriage past puberty, the more sexual temptations he or she will naturally have to face. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 96 percent of Americans over the age of 20 have had sex.<sup>15</sup> Premarital sex is an epidemic in the world and in the church. We must seek to protect our young people. Does this mean that young people should get married at 13 years old? No, I’m not suggesting this. However, I am recommending that young people avoid sexual temptation and not postpone marriage until all their proverbial “ducks are in a row.” If you are spiritually ready and are in a godly relationship that you are willing to commit to for the rest of your earthly life, you have the biblical freedom to marry.

But I must balance these comments by speaking to both parents and teens. Parents, apart from your child’s relationship with Jesus Christ, do you realize that the most important passion you can develop in your son or daughter is to be a godly husband or wife? We typically don’t give this as much thought as we should. We are more concerned about ensuring that our children get good grades, get into the right college, and learn the right profession. However, if you really want to set your child up for success, prepare your child to be a godly spouse. Teach your child responsibility and commitment. Encourage your child to look forward to marriage. Let your child know that nothing matters more than being a godly husband or wife.

Teenagers, do not attempt to use my words against your parents’ wishes. Even though you may be immersed in a flame of passion that is burning you to the core of your being, most of you are not ready for marriage. A Christian marriage is a covenant before God that is filled with blood, sweat, and tears. It is not something to be entered into lightly. So if you want to get married soon or in the near future, I would suggest that you work feverishly on your relationship with Christ, prioritize your purity, and find a good job or finish college as quickly as you can.

I might also add that until God brings the right person into your life He will provide the strength to resist temptation. Two of the best means through which His strength is realized are spiritual service and physical exercise. Additionally, He expects you to avoid listening to, looking at, or being around anything that strengthens the temptation, and to focus your minds on that which is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, of excellence and worthy of praise (see Phil 4:8).

I teach at Ecola Bible School every year. This past year, I talked to several young men about marriage. What astounded me was that these 18-19 year-old men are preparing for marriage. In fact, they aspire for marriage! I've never seen anything like it. Each of these young men told me that they would choose marriage over their own goals, their own wealth, and their own desires. What's even more impressive is that three of these men were wearing a ring on their wedding finger. They explained to me that they were waiting to have sex until they married. This thrills my heart and gives me hope.

[Paul is clear: you need to consider marriage carefully. But if you choose to get married you must...]

**2. Remain married permanently (7:10-16).** In this disputed section, Paul urges Christian spouses to remain married. In 7:10-11, Paul writes to Christian spouses in a Christian marriage: **“But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave [divorce]<sup>16</sup> her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.”** Paul gives instructions that are from the Lord Jesus who spoke about the permanence of marriage (cf. Matt 5:32; 19:6; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:8).<sup>17</sup> Divorce is not an option—neither for the husband to divorce his wife nor for the wife to divorce her husband. It is worth noting that there is a parenthetical statement in 7:11:<sup>18</sup> (“but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband”). It is *possible* that Paul may have been making a compassionate provision for an abused woman.<sup>19</sup> This seems to indicate that God Himself is acknowledging that some marriages, even between Christians, are so difficult and so unwholesome and so degrading that divorce is the lesser of two evils. It is as though God is regrettably tolerating a violation of one of His own principles.<sup>20</sup> Regardless, for the believer who divorces his believing spouse there are two options: singleness or reconciliation. Remarriage to a different spouse is not biblically permissible.<sup>21</sup>

We must recognize that “divorce” is an expletive. Many of us who would never drop an expletive or use Jesus’ name in vain, frequently bring up divorce. However, this is equally sinful. If you are married, God’s intent and expectation is that your marriage goes the distance.<sup>22</sup> This means *when* (not if) there are problems in your marriage, it is imperative that you go to the leadership of the church before it’s too late. Too often, couples run to the pastors and elders when their marriage is on life support and nothing can be done to salvage it. Yes, God can and will work miracles, but it is wise to include Him in our marriage trauma before it’s too late.

Paul continues his argument for the permanence of marriage in 7:12-16. But in these verses Paul writes to a believer who is married to an unbeliever: **“But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”<sup>23</sup>** Four times in 7:10-13, Paul prohibits divorce. To write it once would be sufficient. Twice would be unmistakably clear. Three times would be more than enough. But four times? The man means business!<sup>24</sup> In 7:12, Paul distinguishes between his own apostolic instruction and Jesus’ teaching during His earthly ministry. Paul deals with a situation about which the Lord gave no instruction in his earthly teaching.<sup>25</sup> Now it is very important for us to recognize that the mixed marriages Paul is addressing here are the by-products of the conversion of one of the partners. When these two individuals got married they were both unbelievers; now one of them has become a Christian. This section does not apply to a believer who violates God’s law by *knowingly* marrying an unbeliever. For such a person to appeal to this passage would be like a teenager killing his parents and then appealing to the judge for leniency on the grounds that he’s an orphan.<sup>26</sup>

In 7:12-16, the discussion is not about a believing spouse initiating a divorce. Instead, the unbelieving spouse initiates the divorce.<sup>27</sup> The general principle in 7:12-16 is that those who are married are to stay married (i.e., the believer should remain married to the unbeliever). But although the believer should not initiate the divorce, if the unbeliever should do so, the believer is no longer bound to the marriage (7:15). Paul granted permission for divorce in the case of a believer being deserted by an unbeliever.<sup>28</sup>

This is stated in 7:15, where Paul writes that the believer is “not bound in regard to marriage” (i.e., free to remain single or to remarry).<sup>29</sup> In 7:39-40, there is a conceptual parallel where a wife is said to be “bound” (a different word in Greek, but the same concept) as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is “free” to marry as she wishes, only in the Lord. If the parallel holds, then not bound in 7:15 also means “free to marry another.”<sup>30</sup>

Two motivations that Paul brings out for remaining in an unequally yoked marriage are the spiritual benefits that accrue to your family (7:14) and the hope that you may win your spouse to Christ (7:16). Paul says that the unbeliever is “sanctified” (i.e., set apart for God’s blessings) on account of the believer. Salvation does not change the marriage state. If the wife’s becoming a Christian annulled the marriage, then the children in the home would become illegitimate. Instead, these children may one day be saved if the Christian mate is faithful to the Lord. Paul also holds out hope that the believing spouse may influence the unbelieving spouse to believe the gospel.

I would counsel a Christian whose unsaved spouse has divorced him or her to remain unmarried as long as there is a possibility that the unsaved person may return. However, if the unsaved spouse who has departed remarries, I believe the Christian would be free to remarry since, by remarrying, the unsaved partner has closed the door on reconciliation. Remaining faithful to your marriage blesses your spouse and children.

[Paul urges us to remain married permanently, yet he will also counsel us to...]

**3. Stay put indefinitely (7:17-24).** Paul now departs from commenting about marriage to offer more general considerations about one’s overall situation in life. But since he continues with issues concerning sexuality in 7:25-40, we cannot interpret the present section as unrelated to the marriage issues just discussed. In order to explain the general principle he has been trying to communicate in the previous verses about marriage, Paul uses two other less urgent issues (circumcision and slavery) as examples. His main point is that after experiencing the call of God, each person should remain in the situation he or she was in at the time of that call. Becoming a Christian does not mean totally revamping one’s social status. Do not seek marriage; do not seek singleness; do not seek divorce. In fact, do not actively seek any change in social status!<sup>31</sup>

Paul writes, “**Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. Was any man called *when he was already circumcised*? He is not to become uncircumcised.<sup>32</sup> Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God*. Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ’s slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.” Three times Paul insists that a believer is to remain in the situation he or she was in at the point of faith in Christ (7:17, 20, and 24). This means that a Christian does not have to seek “the right situation” in order to enjoy Christian freedom or to serve God’s call effectively. We should serve God where we are until He calls us elsewhere.**

Again, Paul's overarching point in this passage is *God is happy when we are content*. If you are single—be content, if you are married—be content. Whatever your stage in life, be content.

I read a story some time ago called *The Stonecutter*. Once upon a time, a stonecutter lived all alone. Though he had acquired great skills, he was very poor. He lived in a tiny bamboo hut and wore tattered clothing. One day as the stonecutter worked with his hammer and chisel upon a huge stone, he heard a crowd gathering along the streets. By their shouts he could tell that the king was coming to visit his humble village. Joining in the procession, the stonecutter gazed on as the king, dressed in marvelous silk, was greeted by his subjects. Oh, how I wish I had the power and glory of the king, he thought. He has soldiers at his command. There is no one more powerful. His cry was heard in the heavens, and immediately the humble stonecutter was transformed into a powerful king. He found himself riding on a great horse, waving at the crowds of people who had flocked to see him. This is power, he thought.

As the summer progressed, however, the new king watched the effects of the heat upon his people. Men and animals became weary, and plants withered under the powerful rays of the sun. As he looked at the sky, the new king realized that the sun was more powerful than any earthly ruler. How I wish I were as powerful as that, he thought. I wish I were the sun. Immediately, his wish was granted. The stonecutter relished his new role as the sun. He gloried in the power he felt as he surveyed the kingdoms below. As he sent his bright rays to earth, he watched kings and princes hide under their parasols; he watched as powerful warriors became weak under his gaze. Even the crops in the field were under his command. Then one day a tiny cloud moved over the land, shielding the earth from the sun's bright rays. Seeing that here was something more powerful, he thought, I want very much to be a cloud. Again, his wish was granted. Now he blocked the sun's rays and felt important. He gathered all his strength, becoming a gigantic cloud, and began to pour down rain on the earth. Rivers formed where previously there were none, and water flooded the streets of the cities and the farmland. Everything—trees, animals, people—seemed to be awed by his power. Only the massive rocks were unswayed. There is nothing, he thought, as powerful as a rock. How I wish I were a huge stone. His wish was granted.

As a stone he remained motionless and powerful, unmoved by sun, wind, or rain. He felt exempt from all the forces that shaped the existence of those around him. Then one day a man approached, carrying a bag. When he stopped, he pulled out a chisel and a hammer and began to chip away at the rock. Realizing that the man with the tools was more powerful than any rock, he cried out, "Oh, I want to be a stonecutter." Once again the heavens heard his cry, and he became a stonecutter. Once again he lived in a bamboo hut and made his living with hammer and chisel. And he was content.<sup>33</sup> *God is happy when we are content*.

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**Scripture Reference**

1 Corinthians 7:6-24

Matthew 19:9-12

1 Timothy 5:11-15; 6:6

Luke 9:57-62

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Luke 14:7-11

Lamentations 3:21-23

**Study Questions**

1. Do I recognize my single or marital state as a “gift” from God (7:7)? Why or why not? How can I cultivate contentment in my life? Is there someone who can help me grow in the disciplines of contentment and gratitude?
2. Have I been guilty of contemplating divorce for illegitimate reasons (7:10-11)? Why am I so prone to give up on my marriage? What is most important to me: my happiness or my holiness?
3. How could our church minister more effectively to members with a non-Christian husband or wife (7:12-16)? How can we encourage these spouses to remain with their unbelieving husband or wife?
4. Do I take important decisions in my life as seriously as I should? Am I ready to sacrifice my own desires for the sake of the Lord?
5. How can I bloom where I am planted (7:17-24)? Will I remain content in my current circumstances and wait for the Lord to bring about a change if He so desires?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The source of this quote is unknown. See <http://www.heartquotes.net/Happiness.html>.

<sup>2</sup> This great question comes from Robert Jeffress, *Grace Gone Wild: Getting a Grip on God's Amazing Gift* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2005), 134.

<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of commentators and printed texts take 1 Cor 7:6-9 with 7:1-5; however, in each unit of this chapter after 7:1-5, Paul begins with an assertion of his authority before addressing the particular topic (cf. 7:8, 10, 12, 17, 25). See David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 267. Thus, I have chosen to take 7:6-24 as a section that focuses on specific questions for various audiences in the Corinthian church.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to recognize that in all probability, Paul had been married earlier in his life. Marriage was the norm for young Jewish men. They were expected to marry and then have children to propagate the race and the faith; to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). Rabbis by and large were expected to be married. And we know from the book of Acts that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem before his conversion (Acts 26:10). That ruling body required that its members be married. So Paul was most likely either widowed before this, or divorced by his Jewish wife when he converted to Christianity. Either way, it is helpful to understand that Paul isn't writing about marriage as a dispassionate theological observer. He is not a crusty old bachelor who is anti-marriage. He is comfortable writing about marriage and sexuality, both from his experience as a married man and also as a single man. Yet, Blomberg is careful to write, "Rabbis were almost always married, and members of the Sanhedrin had to be. Acts 22:3 refers to Paul's rabbinic training under Gamaliel, but we do not know if he ever completed it. In Acts 26:10, Paul speaks of 'casting my vote' with the Sanhedrin, but the language could be idiomatic for being in agreement with them. It is therefore perhaps likely that Paul was once married, but we simply cannot be sure." Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 134.

<sup>5</sup> Most commentators understand the "this" (*touto*) to refer to the entire section from 1 Cor 7:2-5, or primarily to 7:5. Yet, Garland argues convincingly for the interpretation adopted here. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 268-270.

<sup>6</sup> BDAG s.v. *suggnome*: "permission to do something, concession, indulgence, pardon." This is a unique word only used here in the entire NT.

<sup>7</sup> The unmarried are a class of people that includes widowers and both men and women who are single, separated or divorced." See Collin Brown, *NIDNTT*, Electronic Ed. And Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistles to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), Electronic Ed.

<sup>8</sup> Paul may mention widows here because they were especially significant members of the early church (cf. 1 Tim 5:3-16). Furthermore, widows may have been more numerous than widowers. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 272.

<sup>9</sup> Verbrugge writes, "We should take careful note of the condition used here. Paul uses *ei* plus the indicative, which suggests that he is expressing a reality that is taking place (i.e., "if, as indeed some are doing, they are not exercising control..."). In other words, Paul knows there are those who are not married but are still having sexual relations, probably with prostitutes (see comments at 6:12-20). Rather than live this lifestyle of *porneia*, Paul says, marriage is preferable by far." See Verlyn D., "1 Corinthians" in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, awaiting publication), 140.

<sup>10</sup> If Paul's counsel is not based primarily on the "present distress" (1 Cor 7:26) he will be contradicting the OT by deprecating marriage and his own words in 1 Tim 5:14 where he instructed young widows to remarry.

<sup>11</sup> Corinth and much of the rest of the Roman world was suffering from famines. This is corroborated by secular history, and by the fact that Paul was taking up the famine relief collection for Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-4). Even though the Corinthians were suffering, those in Jerusalem were evidently suffering worse from the famines.

<sup>12</sup> The word "gift" (*charisma*) is the same word used of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 271.

<sup>14</sup> Preaching Today citation: Howard Vanderwell, "Christian Singles," Preaching Today, Tape No. 99.

<sup>15</sup> Fox News, "CDC Releases Report on Sexual Behavior and Drug Use:

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,286073,00.html>. June 22, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> The word "leave" (*chorizo*) is a word that means "be separated of divorce." See BDAG *chorizo* s.v. 2a. The word had almost become a technical term in referring to divorce during the first century. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 696.

<sup>17</sup> This is one of the rare instances when Paul appeals directly to Jesus' teachings (cf. 1 Cor 9:14; 11:23; 1 Tim 5:18). Usually he taught in harmony with Jesus, without citing Him. Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 71.

<sup>18</sup> This is clearly seen in the NASB, NET, ESV, and NRSV.

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<sup>19</sup> See the helpful pastoral thoughts of Herb Vander Lugt, *Divorce & Remarriage: What Does the Bible Teach?* (Grand Rapids: RBC, 1994), 15-19.

<sup>20</sup> Michael P. Andrus, "Marriage Is for Life, Unless..." (1 Cor 7:10-17), unpublished sermon notes.

<sup>21</sup> Notice the difference between this case and 7:8, where he said regarding the previously married, "if they cannot control themselves, they should marry." Here they are not allowed to remarry. In my estimation the reason for the different treatment is that in 7:8 the previously married person suffered divorce before salvation. But here both spouses are apparently Christians when the divorce takes place. What God is forbidding is the musical chairs syndrome among believers. Some people seem to feel that if their marriage isn't making them fulfilled and happy they should just try someone else and see if it works out better. That is simply not an option open to Christians. Andrus, "Marriage Is for Life, Unless..."

<sup>22</sup> A Chicago based law firm has a huge billboard that reads "Life's short; get a divorce." On the left of the slogan, there is a well endowed woman in a black bra and on the right hand side there is a man unveiling a chiseled six-pack stomach. Hope for couples in unhappy marriages. Call 1-800-Get-Out. Fetman, Garland & Associates, a law firm specializing in divorce cases, is behind the ad. The firm's president said the ad promotes "happiness without judgment." See "Chicago Law Firm Ad Mocks Marriage," 4 May 2007; accessed 6 May 2007: <http://www.citizenlink.org/CLBriefs/A000004547.cfm>.

<sup>23</sup> Exactly opposite conclusions have been drawn as to the force of this. Some feel that it means that marriage should be retained as long as possible in the hope of conversion (cf. NIV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, NEB). To others Paul's meaning is that marriage is not to be regarded simply as an instrument of evangelism. To cling to a marriage which the heathen is determined to end would lead to nothing but frustration and tension.

<sup>24</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening* (Dallas: Word, 1990), 241.

<sup>25</sup> See also NET Study Notes.

<sup>26</sup> Andrus, "Marriage Is for Life, Unless..."

<sup>27</sup> There is a lot of controversy as to what Paul meant when he used the verb "separate" in 7:10-11. Does the word "separate" mean "separate" or "divorce" in our modern sense? The NT does not help us much because all of its 13 usages simply mean depart or separate. In the Greek OT, a form of this same word is used of separation of place. In the ancient Greek writings the term is clearly used as a technical word for divorce. The term is also linked in the immediate context (1 Cor 7:11) with the Greek word *aphiemi*, which clearly means "divorce." In Matt 19:6, "let no man separate" is in contrast to "what God has joined together," and clearly divorce and remarriage are in view.

<sup>28</sup> Is there a principle to be deduced from this passage (and others) when the deserter is a believer? Yes, in Matthew 18:15-17 "treat him as you would a pagan..." (NIV)—that is, treat him as an unbeliever. See also 1 Tim 5:8 where Paul states that a believer who doesn't provide for the members of his household "has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." It is certainly possible for a believer to desert an unbeliever and the principle can apply. Note: In most of these cases, the deserter has committed adultery or will do so at a later time.

<sup>29</sup> Interpreters differ over the implication of the statement the brother or sister is not bound. The opposing view is that the believer is "not bound to continue the marriage" (i.e., not so slavishly tied to the instruction about not divorcing, that he or she refuses to face reality when the unbelieving spouse is unwilling to continue the relationship). In this view divorce is allowable under these circumstances, but not remarriage (7:11 still applies: remain unmarried or be reconciled).

<sup>30</sup> I believe that divorce and remarriage are also permissible in the case of adultery (lit. *porneia*). See my paper at <http://www.timelessword.com/articles/christian-living/biblical-perspective-on-divorce-and-remarriage>.

<sup>31</sup> Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians," 147.

<sup>32</sup> "Let him not pull over the foreskin," that is, attempt to reverse the appearance of circumcision by a surgical procedure. This was sometimes done by Hellenistic Jews to hide the embarrassment of circumcision. See NET Study Notes: 1 Macc 1:15; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.5.1 [12.241]. Cf. BDAG s.v. *epispao* 3.

<sup>33</sup> Preaching Today citation: Martin Thielen, pastor of Olivet Baptist Church in Honolulu, Hawaii, *Leadership* (Fall 1993), 27.