**Chapter 7 starts a turning point in I Corinthians. Up to now, Paul has been giving urgently-needed feedback to the church at Corinth concerning reports that he had received about incidences of misconduct - divisive allegiances to various teachers; openly sinful conduct of a specific member; civil lawsuits between members; and other members who continued to have sexual relations with pagan prostitutes. Paul attributed these behaviors to their spiritual immaturity, as well as their reluctance to make a clean break with their formerly sinful and selfish lifestyles. As we will see, there was a deeper reason – a lack of love for each other!**

**In Chapter 7 Paul deals with questions he had received in a letter from the Corinthian church that stir controversy even today: should a Christian marry? Should a Christian spouse leave their unbelieving partner? Can one marriage partner justifiably deny the advances or needs of the other? These difficult questions represent yet another way that the cultures of the world impacted the conduct of the Corinthian believers. In this chapter, Paul is careful to separate his insightful recommendations from the Lord’s specific commandments. Pay close attention and keep this in mind as you consider these passages.**

1. **Read verses 1-2. How did the Corinthian church communicate with Paul? What was the apparent subject of their first question?**
2. **What was Paul’s answer? (v. 1; Read Matthew 19:3-10) Answer: “It is for a man to a .”**
3. **What was the main reason Paul saw in favor of marriage? (v. 2) Answer: Paul recommended marriage in order to avoid .**
4. **Read verses 3-6. How should husband and wife treat each other? (v. 3) Answer: Paul wrote that each should give to each other. State in your own words what you suppose this means.**
5. **According to Paul, who has “power” (Greek: exousiazo – authority) over the husband’s body? Who has “power” over the wife’s body? (v.4) What does this mean?**
6. **What were legitimate reasons for married couples to keep themselves from (or “defraud”) each other, and how was this to be arranged? (v. 5) Answer: such an arrangement required the of both partners, so that they could devote themselves to and .**
7. **What IMPORTANT qualification did Paul make after these instructions (v.6)? Answer: Paul wrote, “I speak this by , and not of .” Who gave Paul permission to give these instructions?**
8. **Read verse 7. What was Paul’s personal wish for them concerning marriage? Answer: He wished that “ “ were like “ “.**
9. **Paul recognized that every man has his “ of “, regardless of what he wished. (v. 7; read Matthew 19:10-12)**
10. **Read verses 8-11. What was Paul’s counsel to the unmarried and widowed members of the church? (v. 8) Answer: He said that it was “ “ for them to remain (abide) as he was. What does this tell us about Paul’s current marital status?**
11. **What important exception does Paul make to his recommendation? (v. 9) Answer: If the unmarried members “ “, then they should marry, because it is to than to .” Any thoughts?**
12. **What does Paul say to those who are married? Is this his advice or the Lord’s direct command? How do we know? (v.10-11) (See Matthew 19:3-9)**
13. **Read verses 12-16. This passage is addressed to “the rest” of the Corinthian believers. In your own words, how would you describe the marital situation of this group? (key verses 12-13) How could they have gotten into this situation?**
14. **What is Paul’s counsel to this group for the spouse who was a believer (in Jesus)?**
15. **According to verse 14, what “special benefits” are bestowed upon the unbelieving spouse, and extended even to their children? Answer: Paul states that the unbelieving spouse is by the spouse that is a believer, and that as a result, their children are .**
16. **What happens if the unbelieving spouse decides to leave the marriage? Does the believing “ex” face any penalties? (v. 15)**
17. **What question does Paul ask the spouse who is saved? (v. 16) Answer: “For what knowest thou, oh , whether thou shalt save thy ?” (See I Peter 3:1)**
18. **Read verses 17-24. What statement, repeated three times in this short passage of Scripture, summarizes Paul’s counsel to the Corinthian church? (v. 17, 20, 24) Answer: “…as the has called , so let him “.**
19. **Circumcision is a ritual given to Abraham and continued to this day among all Jewish males (Genesis 17:9-13). Gentiles in Paul’s day typically did not practice it. As far as being a Christian is concerned, does it have any importance? (verses 18-19; see Acts 15:1-11)**
20. **Sadly, slavery was a fact of life in ancient times. In wealthy cities like Corinth, slaves (servants) made up a significant part of the population. Greek slaves occupied many roles in society and occasionally had the right to purchase their own freedom, by agreement with their masters. Read verses 21-23. In your own words, what is Paul’s counsel to Christians who were slaves when they were saved? (v. 21)**
21. **Christian slaves are called “the Lord’s .” Free Christians, on the other hand, are called “the Lord’s .” (v. 22). Does this tell us something about the kingdom of God?**
22. **How might a Christian allow themselves to be “enslaved” by others? Why should this never be allowed to happen? What is the price by which we were bought by God? (v. 23)**
23. **Read verses 25-28. Paul now speaks to the never-married, both men and women (virgins). Does he have any commandments from the Lord, or is he offering personal counsel? How do you know? (v. 25)**
24. **What was the reason that Paul gave to the unmarried Corinthian Christians that might make them less inclined to marry? (v. 26) Answer: “this “ that was threatening the church.**
25. **What did Paul advise the married NOT to do? (v.27)**
26. **What did Paul advise the unmarried NOT to do? (v. 27)**
27. **What if the unmarried Christians at Corinth went against Paul’s counsel and got married anyway? Was it a sin? Would there be any consequences? (v. 28)**
28. **Read verses 29-35. This passage reveals the thinking of the apostle Paul, and the basis for his counsel to the church of his day in the matter of marriage. In your own words, describe Paul’s thinking. What is most important to him, and why?**
29. **What does Paul mean when he says the “the time is short” in verse 29?**
30. **How should Christians relate to the things of this world? (v. 29-31; also read I Thessalonians 5:1-3 and II Peter 3:10-14)**
31. **How does the “first priority” of an unmarried Christian compare with the “first priority” of a married Christian (according to Paul)? (v. 32-34)**
32. **What is Paul’s desire for every Christian? (v. 35) Answer: Paul wants all of the believers to “ upon the without .”**
33. **Read verses 36-38. These verses are addressed to the father of an unmarried daughter (referred to as “his virgin”). In many ancient cultures (and in some even today), it was the father who made all of the arrangements for his daughter to marry. In verse 36, Paul lists TWO reasons for a father to permit his daughter to marry. What are they? Answer: 1) “If any man that he behaveth himself toward” her. 2) “if she the of her and so require.”**
34. **Under what THREE conditions would Paul justify a father keeping his daughter from marrying? (v. 37) 1) If he stands “ in his “. 2) If he has over his own .” 3) If he has in his “.**
35. **According to Paul, a father who permits his daughter to marry “ “, but a father who keeps his daughter unmarried “ .” (v. 38)**
36. **Read verses 39-40. Paul addresses the married Christian women in this last passage of Chapter 7. According to the law (see Matthew 19:3-6) how long was the marriage bond to be in effect? (v. 39) Answer: “as long as .”**
37. **If a woman’s husband dies, whom may she marry? (v. 39; see also II Corinthians 6:14)**
38. **Based on Paul’s judgement, what is the “happier” choice for a widow? (v. 40; compare this with the later, more detailed counsel to Timothy concerning Christian widows in I Timothy 5:3-16)**