

The Marriage Manual

Chapter 4

Audio Lesson: New Testament #47



Objective: To understand Paul's teaching on marriage.



Each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

—1 Corinthians 7:7

Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him.

—1 Corinthians 7:17

The seventh chapter of 1 Corinthians has come to be known as the marriage chapter of the Bible. It addresses a number of questions the members of the church at Corinth placed before Paul in a letter they wrote him concerning marriage, singleness, divorce, remarriage, and physical relationships within marriage. For many centuries, when church members have approached their pastors with questions about these dimensions of marriage, this chapter has been the pastor's marriage manual. In this chapter, we discover God's plan for marriage and many of the problem situations that can arise in relation to marriage.

This chapter raises some very difficult questions, the most fundamental of which is, "What is a marriage in the sight of God?" It is answered by Matthew 19:6: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." When two believers are joined together in marriage, they commit their lives to one another because they believe God has joined them together. This belief is the basis that gives their marriage stability, not the piece of paper that says the two of them are legally joined. Given the infinite variables of compatibility and possibilities for marriage partners in this world, the decision to marry should be based on divine guidance.



1. True or false? Paul's advice about marriage was given during a time in which Christians were under great distress and persecution.
2. True or false? Paul was opposed to marriage.
3. True or false? Paul was not married at the time he wrote 1 Corinthians.
4. True or false? The teaching of Paul contradicts the teaching of Jesus.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. According to Paul, why is celibacy a valuable option for a Christian?
 - a. Sex is unholy, even within marriage, and Christians should remain pure.
 - b. Marriage is simply a human institution people developed for the sake of convenience.
 - c. Single people are always holier and happier than married people.
 - d. Single people are able to focus more intently on serving the Lord.
6. Why is a healthy sexual relationship between husband and wife important?
 - a. Sexual satisfaction within marriage is the best defense against immorality.
 - b. God's only purpose for marriage is procreation.
 - c. Men and women must insist that their own needs are met.
 - d. It is not important; rather, it is simply a necessary distraction.
7. What does the Bible say about the permanence of marriage?
 - a. People should remain married only as long as they both want to.
 - b. It is only important for people to remain married for the sake of their children.
 - c. God designed marriage to be a lifelong commitment.
 - d. Marriage lasts for all of eternity, even in heaven.
8. What does Paul instruct when one spouse is an unbeliever but the other has become a believer?
 - a. The believing spouse should divorce the unbelieving spouse because they are now unequal partners.
 - b. The unbelieving spouse should be required to convert to Christianity.
 - c. The believing spouse should pray for the unbelieving spouse and be faithful, but if the unbeliever chooses to leave, then the believer should allow it.
 - d. The believing spouse must still behave as he or she did before conversion, so the unbelieving spouse will not be upset.
9. How should the law of God be applied to us?
 - a. Very rigidly—always the same in every case
 - b. Through the lens of love—always seeking the best for each person
 - c. Very loosely—only in the situations we want to apply it
 - d. Because we are saved by grace through faith, God's rules no longer apply to us. We are free to do whatever we want.

10. Why are marriages and families under so much attack?
- a. Marriage and families are God's plan and Satan wants to block God's plan.
 - b. Because people like to fight.
 - c. Marriage is to picture God's love for His Church and Satan wants to distort, dirty and destroy that picture.
 - d. Because God's blessing for His Church and society flow from families, and Satan wants to stop God's blessing.



What do you believe marriage is meant to be in the sight of God? How do the Bible's standards for marriage differ from your society's standards for marriage?



Thank God both for the gift of marriage and for the gift of celibacy. If you are single, ask Him to guide you in any decisions you will make in the future about marriage, and ask Him to help you serve Him without distraction as long as you are single. If you are married, pray that He would strengthen your marriage and help you serve Him and your spouse with complete faithfulness.



Going Deeper

1. How does the beginning of the seventh chapter reveal a second source that Paul had, through which he knew the issues he should address in this letter? _____

2. As Paul gives inspired solutions regarding marriage problems in this chapter, he is relating to questions they had asked him in a letter they had written to him. By studying his solutions, explain what their questions must have been. _____

3. Why does Paul sometimes write that he has no commandment of the Lord but then he gives his own opinion, and then at other times writes that he is not telling them but the Lord is? (Consider verses 10, 12 and 40) _____

4. In what way is verse 26 a key verse that could explain why Paul places so much value on being single? _____

5. When the marriage is a mixed marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, why is it fair for Paul to give the unbeliever the option about staying in the marriage or leaving? _____

6. Imagine a couple who had multiple marriages and divorces before they heard the Gospel and were saved. How would the passage in verses 17 through 24 apply to them, especially the counsel, repeated three times, that each one should abide or live with the one they were with when they were called or saved? _____

7. In light of what Paul writes about celibacy, should we expect to find people in the body of Christ who are single because they are fulfilled without marriage and want to serve the Lord without distraction? Explain. _____
