

# *Discovering God's Wisdom*

## STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

### **Lesson 7** **1 Corinthians 7:1-24**

#### ***Searching the Scriptures*** ***for hidden treasure***

***"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162***

Chapter 7 begins the section of his letter in which Paul writes in answer to specific questions asked of him by the Corinthian believers. The first question appears to have been about marriage. This is one of those difficult chapters that we often want to circumvent, but we are going to go *right through it* this week with the determination to know what God says about marriage and remarriage.

#### ***First Day: Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7***

1. What was Paul's stand on celibacy (the state of not being married; abstention from sexual intercourse)? v. 1
  - a. How did Paul see celibacy as it applied to him and others like him? v. 7
  - b. Why do you think Paul regarded celibacy in this way? See 1 Cor. 7:32-34a
  - c. How did Jesus say this? Matthew 19:10-12

Although Paul begins with a word on celibacy (probably in answer to a specific question), his emphasis in this section is not on celibacy but on marriage.

2. From this passage, give 2 reasons it is better for men and women to marry.  
*verse 2*  
*verse 7*
  - a. What is God's viewpoint? Genesis 2:18

We learned in the last 2 chapters (5 and 6) that a big problem in Corinth was immorality. It seems that there were those who took things to the opposite extreme saying that *all* sexual relations were bad and that sex should be abstained from even in marriage.

3. What is Paul's response to this viewpoint?  
*verse 3*  
*verse 4*  
*verse 5a*

4. What is the only exception Paul gives for abstaining from sex in the marriage relationship? v. 5
  - a. What warning does Paul give in the case of this exception?
  - b. In your own words, what is Paul’s fear for the married couple that does not continue fulfilling each other’s physical needs?

### *Making It Personal...*

In the early days of marriage a couple is very aware of the needs of their spouse—but when the years go by and the difficulties of life press in, recognizing and caring for the needs of the other may go by the wayside. Rather than thinking from the negative perspective of fulfilling a *duty*, it might help to get the positive perspective of *caring*, realizing that what 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 teaches is that married couples have a responsibility to *care* for each other.

5. *Whether you are married or single:* How has the Lord spoken to you in today’s portion of Scripture?

### *Digging Deeper*

- ❖ Look at the following verses that tell us what the Bible—therefore God Himself—says about marriage:

*Genesis 2:18 and 24*

*Matthew 19:6*

*Romans 7:2-3*

*1 Corinthians 7:4*

*Ephesians 5:21-25*

*Ephesians 5:33*

*Hebrews 13:4*

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today’s passage in a couple of sentences.

### *Pearl of Great Price*

**“Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”** Malachi 2:16b This is your memory verse—begin memorizing it today!

### **Second Day: Read 1 Corinthians 7:8-16**

Paul gives instructions in this section for 3 possible situations: 1) people who are unmarried; 2) Christians married to Christians; 3) Christians married to unbelievers.

1. What does Paul say to the unmarried and widows? v. 8
  - a. What does he mean, exactly?

- b. What exception does he give? v. 9
2. What instruction is given to those in marriages where both parties are Christians? v. 10
- a. Whose instruction is this, according to this verse?
  - b. If a woman decides to leave her Christian husband, what is her recourse? v. 11
  - c. What was Jesus' word on this? Matthew 5:32
3. What instruction is given to Christians married to non-believers? v. 12-13

It's possible that there were some Christians in Corinth who thought it would be advantageous to leave their pagan spouse and marry a Christian. Paul says, "No!"

- a. In verse 14, Paul gives the reason for the Christian to remain with the unbelieving spouse, if that spouse consents—what does he say?

We know that Paul doesn't mean here that the husband or the children will be *saved* by their relationship to the believer. Each person must individually come to Christ and be born again by the Spirit of the Lord.

- b. Share your thoughts on what Paul might mean when he says the unbelieving husband is sanctified and the children made holy.

4. What exception does he give to the believer married to a non-believer? v. 15
- a. Why? v. 15b

### *Making It Personal...*

1 Peter 3:1-4 is written particularly for a woman married to an non-believing husband, but it is a beneficial word to every married woman and even to the single woman who one day hopes to be married. Read these verses (the Amplified Bible is best!) and apply them, where you can, to your particular situation.

### *Digging Deeper*

- ❖ As you read the passage today—God's word on divorce and remarriage—it is obvious that the allowance for room is narrow in either case. Carefully read Malachi 2:13-16 to see **God's** perspective on divorce.

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

**Third Day: Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24**

What we have studied so far has to do with celibacy, marriage, divorce, and remarriage. As a title to the whole chapter we could take the final verses and summarize with the words, *Stay Where You Are*.

1. How does Paul say this in:  
*verse 17*  
*verse 20*  
*verse 24*
2. What examples does Paul give of this principle being true?  
✓ *Example—verse 18*  
  
*Why? verse 19*  
  
✓ *Example—verse 21*  
  
*Why? v. 22*
  - a. Apply Paul's principle of *staying where you are* to:  
✓ *the unmarried—v. 8*  
✓ *married Christians—v. 10*  
✓ *Christians married to non-believers—v. 13*
3. Consider the only exception to the principle of *staying where you are* (verse 24) when you come to the Lord.

*Making It Personal...*

In *marriage* there is no question (except in very specific cases)—God says stay put! But there *are* areas in life in which you may have a choice to move or to stay.

4. Is there a situation in your life that you've been trying to find a way out of, but to no avail? Could it be that God is asking you to *stay where you are*?
  - a. There is a saying, "*Bloom where you're planted.*" What does this mean to you in your life today?

*Digging Deeper*

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

**Fourth Day:**

**Deeper Discoveries**

*This portion of the lesson will take a closer look at some of the words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools—or resources at hand: more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia. (If you don't have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning.)*

Using the tools you have at hand, do some digging into the following terms. Start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary), and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging (making notes in the margins). After you've completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today's lesson will lay the groundwork for tomorrow's study, so be as thorough as you can in your research.

**Deprive (defraud) (7:5)** *“Do not deprive one another except with consent...”*

Dictionary definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What does the Bible have to say? Mark 10:19; 1 Corinthians 6:8; 1Thessalonians 4:3-6

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❖ Write your own definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Self-control, lack of (incontinency - referring to sexual intercourse) (7:5)** *“...Come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”*

Dictionary definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What does the Bible have to say? 1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Timothy 3:1-3; 1 Peter 2:11

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❖ Write your own definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***Fifth Day:***

***Heartsearch***

*Are you walking worthy of your high calling? Are you applying the wisdom of God to your daily life? Get ready for some self-discovery! This portion of the lesson will give you the opportunity to examine your heart, express your mind, and experience your lesson, by applying what you are learning to everyday circumstances.*

**Mutual Consent**

It's possible that the believers in Corinth had begun to think that the sexual union of married life was not consistent with the holiness of the Christian life. Paul refutes that thinking by telling them that Christian couples are not to deprive one another except with mutual consent for a limited time. The same holds true for today: we are not to withhold our bodies from our spouse thinking we are doing so in our pursuit of holiness. God's word in Genesis 2:18 was: "*It is not good that the man should be alone.*" He instituted the marriage relationship, bringing the woman to the man to complete and fulfill him, making the two one flesh. If we allow the cares of this world, or the mindset that we are more spiritual if we abstain from sex, to rule our way of thinking, we will find ourselves disobeying God's Word and the consequences will be harmful to the marriage relationship.

1. What are some of the reasons you can think of that married couples begin to withhold sex from each other?
  - a. What are some of the possible consequences of doing so? (Don't rush with your answer, think this over carefully.)

We learned from the investigation in our word study that the word *deprive* means to wrong or defraud another of what belongs to them. It can also mean withholding through deceit or taking advantage of another. Sex should never be used as a tool or as leverage against the other person. That is why Paul states that withholding sex should only be by *mutual consent* of both parties and for the purpose of fasting and prayer. Think of how much good could be brought about in a relationship where both the husband and the wife occasionally fasted and prayed together for the good of their marriage and family. Such unity would make mutual submission in marriage a beautiful thing to behold!

2. If a husband and wife are submitting to one another in love, as they should, what benefits will it bring to their marriage?

Abstinence is only meant to be temporary. A husband and wife should soon come together again to prevent Satan from tempting them due to a lack of self-control.

3. What are some ways a husband and wife can work at being in tune with each other's spiritual and physical needs?
  
4. Read Ephesians 5:22 and 25, and comment on how marriage can be a *ministry* for both the husband and wife to each other.

The bottom line is that deep down there are two lives united together in the Lord. Within that bond there are sacred responsibilities where the rights of both parties are to be respected and honored. Christian marriage is not to be used as an excuse for personal license or the satisfaction of one's own flesh. The heart of this passage is the recognized admission of the rights of the husband and wife in the sexual relationship, with the desire of both being the love, respect, and care of the other.

***Heartsearch:*** Briefly look back over your *entire lesson* before filling in the following.

❖ *Examine your heart*

What has God put His finger on through your study and brought to light in a new way? (What did you learn about yourself?)

❖ *Express your mind*

What change has this week's study brought about in your thought process? What difference will this make in how you view your current circumstances?

❖ *Experience your lesson*

What nugget of wisdom from your lesson do you plan to apply to your life?

*Sixth Day:*

## ***Laying Up Treasure***

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.  
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:19-21*

The highest calling of the believer, and the most important way to lay up treasure in heaven, is through intercessory prayer. You will want to give thoughtful consideration to what you record on this page, as it will be the basis for your prayer during group time. The format for this day of your lesson is based upon the ACTS method of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In addition to these four, there is space provided for you to keep track of answered prayers, people and things you want to pray for in the coming week, and also a place to write out this week’s Scripture verse from memory.

Using the lesson as your focal point, write out your prayer for each of the following:

***I praise God for*** (an aspect of His marvelous character)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***I confess to God that I***\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***I thank God for***\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***I am asking God***\_\_\_\_\_

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***Praise for answered prayer:***\_\_\_\_\_

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***People/things I want to pray for this coming week:***\_\_\_\_\_

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*Pearl of Great Price:* \_\_\_\_\_

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***Notes***

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Written by Janis Vance and Linda Osborne