



1 Corinthians 7

INTRODUCTION:

- In chapter 7 Paul address a number of marriage questions the Corinthian congregation had for him. Before we jump into the text, what sorts of questions do you think they had?
- *Agree / Disagree: A single person isn't really qualified to help people with their marriages. If you're not married, there's no way you can truly understand it.*
- If you're struggling in your marriage, and your WELS pastor is a guy who has never been married, would you seek help from him or not? Why / why not?

Is it better to marry or not?

1 Corinthians 7:1-7

1 Now concerning the things you wrote: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. **2** But because of sexual sins, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. **3** The husband is to fulfill his obligation to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. **4** The wife does not have authority over her own body—her husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body—his wife does. **5** Do not deprive one another, unless you both agree to do so for a time, in order to devote yourselves to prayer and then come together again, so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. **6** However, I say this as a concession, not as a command. **7** For I wish all people were like me, but each person has his own gift from God. One person is blessed in this way, another in a different way.

- In verse 1 the EHV translates the last word “touch a woman” whereas the NIV uses the word “marry”. This particular word for “touch” was a euphemism in Greek for sexual relations. What, precisely, do you think the question to Paul was (and therefore what translation do you prefer)?
- What's the other side of the coin in Paul's response of verse 2?
- *Agree / Disagree: If Paul thought the immorality was bad in Corinth, he should see it today—it's much worse.*
- What question was answered in verses 3-5?
- My wife has authority over my body (and vice versa) - what does that mean?

- What is verse 6 in reference to, and what does it mean?
- Paul considered his situation a gift, not a curse. What was it? Why was it a gift for him?
 - Is having a strong libido therefore a curse?
- Think of some other examples where having absolutely no appetite for something we are free to enjoy, is a gift:

The widows & the mixed marriages:

1 Corinthians 7:8-16

8 I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain as I am. 9 But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, because it is better to marry than to burn with desire.

10 Next I command the married (it is the Lord's command not mine): A wife is not to leave her husband 11 (but if she does leave, she is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband), and a husband is not to divorce his wife.

12 But I, not the Lord, say to the rest: If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she is willing to go on living with him, he is not to divorce her. 13 If any woman has an unbelieving husband, and he is willing to go on living with her, she is not to divorce her husband. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified in connection with his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified in connection with her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. The brother or the sister is not bound in such cases, and God has called us to live in peace.

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

- What answers the question regarding widows in verses 8-9?
 - It depends on whether or not they have _____
- What does he mean in verse 10 when he says it's the Lord's command not his?
 - Are Christians on 2nd or 3rd marriages (where the X is still alive) living in sin?
- Agree / Disagree: *Paul is disagreeing with Jesus in verse 12?* Why does he say that?
- The heathen has been sanctified through his wife, does that mean he'll go to heaven even if he doesn't believe in Jesus?
 - (Verse 16 answers it.) What *does* it mean?
 - Explain the last part of verse 14. Aren't children almost always unclean?
- There are 2 instances when a believer can experience divorce and it's not sinful on his or her part. They are _____ and _____.

- Agree / Disagree: *The wife who reconciles with the husband who cheated is a fool. She should just divorce him and move on.*
- Do you think it was tough for Paul, given his background, to say what he did in the first part of verse 19?
- In verse 16 why does Paul use the phrase “you will save” verses “God will save”?
- Agree / Disagree: *Christians are to abandon initiative, and just be content to stay wherever they are in life.*

Be a Christian right where you are:

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

17 However, each person is to live in the situation the Lord assigned to him—the situation he was in when God called him to faith. I give this same command in all the churches. **18** If a man was circumcised when he was called, he should not become uncircumcised. If a man was uncircumcised when he was called, he should not get circumcised. **19** Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping God’s commands is important. **20** Let each person stay in that calling in which he was called. **21** Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let it bother you. But if you are able to become free, take advantage of it. **22** For the slave who was called to be in the Lord is the Lord’s freed person. Likewise, the free person who was called is Christ’s slave. **23** You were bought at a price. Do not become slaves of men. **24** Brothers, let each person remain before God in the situation he was in when he was called.

- Considering what Paul said in verse 17, what do you think new Christians in the early church thought they had to do?
- Agree / Disagree: *I don’t think uncircumcision is possible. Maybe someone in Corinth was selling prosthetics?*
 - Why does Paul even mention it?

Tough Times Ahead:

1 Corinthians 7:25-31

25 Now concerning virgins, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one whom the Lord in his mercy made worthy of trust. **26** Accordingly, I think this is good because of the difficult situation we face, namely, that it is good for a person to remain as he is. **27** Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be freed. Are you unattached? Do not seek a wife. **28** But if you do get married, you have not sinned, and if a virgin gets married, she has not sinned. Yet such people will be under pressure in their earthly lives, and I am trying to spare you.

29 I also say this, brothers: The time is short. From now on, let those who have wives live as if they have none; **30** those who weep, as if not weeping; those who rejoice, as if not rejoicing; those who buy, as if not possessing; **31** and those who use the world, as if not getting any use out of it. For the way of life that belongs to this world is passing away.

- Agree / Disagree: *Verse 25 means Paul is giving them some Godly advice here as opposed to telling them what to do.*
- What do you think the difficult situation facing them was?

- Agree / Disagree: *In verses 25-28 Paul is essentially telling them they are free to do whatever they want in this regard, and he's encouraging them to choose wisely.*
- Respond to the person who says, *"Paul was wrong in verse 29. They had plenty of time. Corinth is still there 2,000 years later."*
- Do verses 29-31 contradict everything Paul just said in the previous verses?

- What *does* he mean, and what is his point here?

- Don't be too attached to _____

- Verse 31 in the EHV reads: **For the way of life that belongs to this world is passing away.** The NIV translates it: **For this world in its present form is passing away.** Both translations are solid, but what's the difference in interpretation between them?

- Which do you prefer and why?

- Scripture encourages us to have an "End Times Perspective" on things - what does that mean?

Freedom and Focus:

1 Corinthians 7:32-40

32 I would like you to be free from concern. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord and thinks about how to

please the Lord. 33 But the married man is concerned about the things of the world and thinks about how to please his wife, 34 and so he is divided. The unmarried woman and the virgin are concerned about the things of the Lord, so as to be holy both in body and in spirit. But the married woman is concerned about the things of the world and thinks about how to please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your own benefit, not to impose a restriction, but to encourage honorable, undistracted devotion to the Lord.

36 But if someone thinks he is behaving inappropriately toward his virgin, if his feelings are strong and it seems necessary, he should do what he desires. It is not a sin. They should marry. 37 But if someone stands firm in his heart and is not driven by need, but has control over his own desire and has decided in his own heart to keep his virgin as she is, he does well. 38 So then, he who marries his virgin does well, and he who does not marry her does better.

39 A wife is bound to her husband for as long as he lives, but if the husband has died, she is free to be married to any man she wishes, only in the Lord. 40 But she is more blessed if she stays as she is, in my judgment, and I think that I too have God's Spirit.

- What does Paul mean in the first part of verse 32?
- Agree / Disagree: *Married people can't keep the 1st Commandment as well as singles can.*
- What do you think Paul would recommend to us modern people regarding sports / TV / video games / social media / etc. today?

- Agree / Disagree: *All these modern distractions have crossed over the line into becoming sinful distractions.*

- Verses 36-38 are challenging. “His virgin” could here apply to 2 very different situations. It could be a single man in a dating relationship who is wrestling with whether or not to get married. Or, it could refer to a virgin daughter living at home - and whether or not the father is willing to give her away in marriage. The way it’s translated in both EHV and NIV favor the former situation (vs. “giving her in marriage” - the Greek could go either way.) Regardless of exactly what situation Paul was dealing with here, what was his advice?
- What seems to be the final question Paul was asked that he wrapped up in verses 39-40?

CONCLUSION:

- Agree / Disagree: *This chapter destroys Roman Catholic theology when it comes to sexuality and celibacy.*
- What are some lessons we modern believers can take from this chapter of Scripture?

CLOSING PRAYER: