

Message #30

I Corinthians 7:35-40

When we come to a passage like this in I Corinthians, it is very clear that God expected a father to be very involved in helping his daughter determine whether she would or would not marry. The selection of a husband was not just to be left up to the daughter or a pastor, but also the father.

GOD'S IDEAL WOULD BE THAT A DAUGHTER REMAIN SINGLE, BUT IF SHE DESIRES TO MARRY, BOTH SHE AND HER FATHER SHOULD USE CERTAIN GUIDELINES IN DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT SHE SHOULD MARRY.

This passage assumes that the father is a believer in the church who is very much interested in doing the will of God and obeying the Word of God, in the matter of his daughter's marriage.

We know the context is addressed to a father because of the verb "he who gives...in marriage" (7:38). The ONLY person in a position to give his daughter in marriage during this historical era was a father.

Certainly this text sets forth two key Biblical principles for any age:

Principle #1 - A father who honors God will counsel with his daughter concerning marriage.

Principle #2 - A daughter who honors God will listen to her father concerning her marriage.

CATEGORY #1 – Guidelines for the father concerning his daughter's marriage. **7:36-38**

We can certainly understand why Paul writes on this subject at this point in the context. He had just completed stressing that it is good, if possible, for one to remain single and has cited several reasons why:

Reason #1 - Because of present distress. **7:26**

Reason #2 - Because of fleshly trouble. **7:27b**

Reason #3 - Because of limited time. **7:29-31**

Reason #4 - Because of total dedication. **7:32-35**

Naturally a godly father in the church of Corinth, who had a great deal to say in this culture concerning his daughter's marriage, might be prone to think, in light of all this that he should forbid his daughter to ever marry. A father who truly wanted to obey God might conclude, in view of this revelation from God, I should absolutely refuse to give my daughter away in marriage.

Set of Guidelines #1 - Guidelines for a father advising his daughter TO marry. 7:36**Guideline #1 - His own thoughts. 7:36a**

The verb “think” speaks of a continual consideration or deeming and habitual supposition. The point seems to be that there will be a continual method of thinking that will be held, concerning the marriage. Some fathers are very excited at the thought of a daughter remaining single and serving God. Some fathers are very depressed at the thought of a daughter remaining single and serving God. Each father is to analyze his thinking on this matter. In fact, according to the O.T. Law of God, if a single daughter made a vow to remain single, the father played an important role in determining whether or not the vows were valid (Num. 30:3-6).

Guideline #2 - His daughter’s age. 7:36b

The term “full age” seems to me to be a reference to the fact that the daughter is old enough to marry rather than too old to marry. In fact, the Greek word literally means “past the bloom of youth” (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 458).

The point is that a father is to carefully calculate his daughter’s age in determining whether she is old enough and mature enough to marry.

Guideline #3 - His daughter’s need. 7:36c

The words “if it must be so” are words that mean a daughter may have a need to marry and assumes that the father knows his daughter’s need, is close to her and communicates things to her. Marriage is not a sin, but the father who refuses to play his part in counseling his daughter lives in rebellion against God’s Word and that is a sin.

Set of Guidelines #2 - Guidelines for a father advising his daughter NOT TO marry. 7:37**Guideline #1 - His own heart. 7:37a**

Twice in this one verse, Paul challenges a father to examine his own heart. If a father discovers in his own heart that his daughter is too young, that he is not dishonored by the fact that she is not married and that she seems to be able to get along without marriage and he discovers that he is standing firm in this conviction, then the father should advise his daughter not to marry. Some fathers are afraid to say anything to their daughters. Their daughters may be wrong and out of God’s will and they are too afraid to address it.

Guideline #2 - His own will. 7:37b

Paul not only challenges the father to examine his own heart, but his own will. Paul assumed that God could and would work through the personality of a godly father to determine whether or not his daughter should marry.

Guideline #3 - His own decision. **7:37c**

If the father examines his heart and determines this marriage should not be, he should stand firm in his decision and should advise his daughter not to marry.

CATEGORY #2 – Guidelines for a woman concerning her own marriage. **7:39-40**

It seems to me that specifically Paul is aiming these two final verses at women who had lost their spouse, who were thinking of remarriage.

Guideline #1 - Marriage binds for life. **7:39a**

If you are not married, just remember that the man you marry is for the rest of his life. God sees marriage as a sacred bind, which is to be lifelong and life lasting.

Guideline #2 - Marriage is only to be to a Christian. **7:39b**

Marriage or remarriage is ONLY to be to a believer, one who is “in the Lord.”

Guideline #3 - Marriage is not necessarily the happiest option. **7:40**

Any woman will save herself some pain, sorrow and trouble if she chooses to remain single for the glory of God. A single woman will never have to bury her husband; she will never have to watch a son or daughter wander far away from the things of God. She will never have to perhaps bury a child.

There is, however, one commitment that you must make. It will save you from much sorrow and tragedy in this life and the next and that, of course, is a commitment to Jesus Christ.