

Message #25

I Corinthians 7:6-9

As near as I can determine, there are at least six biblical reasons for getting married: 1) For partnership (Gen. 2:18); 2) For procreation (Gen. 1:28); 3) For pleasure (Prov. 5:18-19; Song of Sol.); 4) For purity (I Cor. 7:2); 5) For love (Eph. 5:22-31); and 6) For picture (Eph. 5:32-33).

Clearly three of the six reasons for marriage (reasons 2, 3, 4) have to do with sexuality.

One very important reason why people marry is for intimacy, and a critical biblical issue of whether a person marries is the issue of whether or not a person has a God-given ability to refrain from physical intimacy.

Corinth was a sex-crazed city. Greek philosophy and religion promoted sexual immorality. Prostitutes were not only on every corner in Corinth, but they were in every pew in the temple.

MARRIAGE OR REMARRIAGE IS DETERMINED, IN PART, BY WHETHER OR NOT A PERSON HAS A GOD-GIVEN GIFT AND ABILITY TO REFRAIN FROM SEXUAL ACTIVITY.

Now we may recall that we are in a section in which Paul is answering a series of questions which the Corinthians wanted him to answer (7:1). We saw last time that he addressed the subjects of sex before marriage (7:1-2) and sex after marriage (7:3-5). Now in these verses, Paul answers at least two more questions for the Corinthians:

QUESTION #1 – Should a person ever marry? 7:6-7

What Paul is saying in **verse 6** is I am not commanding anyone to marry or remarry, or to remain single; I am simply setting forth biblical options which are permissible.

The Apostle Paul was ALWAYS very careful NOT to command something God did not command (i.e. 7:25). At times he might give his opinion, but he NEVER equated his opinion as being a command of God.

Now Paul's personal desire or wish was that ALL people were single like him. At the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he was not married. God DID NOT apparently do this in every apostle's life, for we know Peter was a married man (Luke 4:38; I Cor. 9:5). One of the reasons why Paul wished this is because one who is not married can intensely and totally commit himself/herself to the work of God (7:32).

However, Paul knew that the determining factor of marriage or remarriage was not whether or not a person wanted to conform to Paul's wish, but whether or not a person had a special gift of God. It was not conformity to Paul's will that determined marriage or remarriage; it was conformity to God's will that determined it.

It was God who made Eve and gave her as a gift to Adam (Gen. 2:18-25). According to this passage written by Paul and the teachings of our Lord (Matt. 19:3-12), some people have a God-given gift and ability to remain single and others do not.

The word “gift” (I Cor. 7:7; Matt. 19:11) is the same word that is used of spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12:4, 11). A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability given by God to a person. Some people have been given a supernatural ability to refrain from sexual activity and others have not. A central key to determining whether or not you should marry is whether or not you can control your desire for physical intimacy.

QUESTION #2 – Should a person ever remarry? **7:8-9**

In I Corinthians 7, there are at least three classifications of people as they relate to marriage:

Classification #1 - Those who have never married (7:1, 25, 28-38)–virgins.

Classification #2 - Those who were presently married (7:3-5).

Classification #3 - Those who have been previously married (**7:8**, 11)–widowed, divorced or deserted.

In **verse 8** Paul stresses two types of people who had been previously married:

Type #1 - Those who were presently unmarried. **7:8a**

The term “unmarried” is the same term used in verse 11. It is not referring to a virgin, but one who had been previously married but at the present time was not married. This is a specific contextual reference to those who had either been divorced or deserted (7:15).

Type #2 - Those who were presently widowed. **7:8b**

The term “widow” refers to those who have had a spouse die. Paul’s answer was that he thought it would be good if they could remain as he presently was, namely single. The words “as I myself” emphatically stress in the original that Paul could personally relate to their previously married status and their present unmarried status. Obviously Paul, at one time, had been married but at the present time was not married.

(Evidence #1) - Paul excelled in ALL Jewish leadership requirements–Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5.

According to historians, marriage was mandatory for all Jewish leaders.

(Evidence #2) - Paul voted on a Jewish leadership decision–Acts 26:10.

Most believe this meant he was a member of the Sanhedrin, for only they had the right to voice a vote.

(Evidence #3) - Paul may have had a mother-in-law who lived in Rome –Romans 16:13.

Some suggest that at one time Paul was married to Rufus' sister, which would make Rufus' mother his mother-in-law.

(Evidence #4) - Paul's grammar and context in I Cor. 7 –I Cor. 7:8.

The emphatic stress of the text seems to clearly suggest that Paul was either one of the widowers or one of the unmarried. Paul's wife either died or left him and he at the present time was not married.

Reason #1 - Because of present distress. 7:26
Ministry is very hard on a wife and children and can be discouraging to see.

Reason #2 - Because of Christ's return. 7:29
They do not need to worry about providing for a family and can totally center all of life on the Lord.

Reason #3 - Because of total dedication. 7:32-33
One who is unmarried can devote all effort, all money, all time, even all energy on doing God's work.

However, **verse 9** makes it very clear that Paul knew the determining factor was whether or not God had given a person the gift to remain single, particularly a supernatural ability to refrain from sexual activity

It was much better for a believer to remarry than to try and spend the rest of his life enflamed or consumed by sexual desires or lusts. A somewhat hindered devotion to God is much better than a total devotion to sex. In other words, marriage or remarriage is determined by whether or not a person has a God-given gift and ability to refrain from sexual activity.

It is clear from I Cor. 7:9, 7:27-28 and Matt. 19:3-12 that people do have a right to remarry. The issue of remarriage after a divorce, desertion or a death is whether or not a person has a God-given ability to refrain from sexual activity.

When all is said and done, marriage or remarriage is not determined by the whims of a pastor; it is determined by the will of God.

If you are sexually active and you are not married, you are outside of the will of God and you are heading to the judgment of God.