

# Guidelines for Singleness and Marriage

Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher 6/28/20 (c) 2020

*1 Corinthians 7:8-40*

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## OPENING STATEMENTS

1. We are looking again this morning at 1 Corinthians chapter 7.
2. So please take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 7.
3. In our last time together we looked at the first 7 verses and saw Paul's remedy to sexual immorality.
4. Today as we look at verses 8-40, we will hear his guidelines for singleness and marriage.

5. Listen as I begin reading at verse 8.

## **BIBLE VERSE**

8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.

9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband

11 (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.

13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing

husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

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

17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

18 Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.

20 Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.

21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.

22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

24 Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.

25 Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.

26 I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

28 But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

29 But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;

30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess;

31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

32 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;

33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,

34 and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

36 But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

37 But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well.

38 So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

40 But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. These are Paul's guidelines for singleness and marriage
2. He addresses four groups: the unmarried and widows (v.8), the married in verse 10, and virgins in verse 25
3. The Corinthians wrote Paul about marriage and singleness and their present situation and wanted to know God's will in this matter (v.1)

4. His first answer was in verses 1-7 and taught that the remedy to sexual immorality is to marry
5. And to the married he says for them to stop depriving one another of their sexual fulfillment unless it is for a time of prayer
6. Each has authority over the other's body
7. Now he addresses the first two groups in verse 8 as he shares whether they can marry nor not

**1**

## **To the Unmarried and Widows (vv.8-9)**

### **BIBLE VERSE**

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

### **A. REMAIN SINGLE (V.8)**

Now Paul addresses two groups: the unmarried and widows.

1. The unmarried (v.8)

1. He uses the word “unmarried” 4 times in this chapter \* (vv.8, 11, 32, 34) to describe those who have been divorced

2. It's used in verse 11 to describe divorce

3. It is also distinct from “virgin” in verse 34 where Paul refers to two groups, the unmarried and the virgin

## 2. Widows (v.8)

1. This refers to those who were married but lost their spouse through death

2. In this verse he recommends that both groups remain as he is

3. The phrase “Even as I” may refer to Paul having been married but now a widower

## 3. Both groups have previously experienced marriage

1. The first group was divorced before coming to Christ

2. The second group lost their spouse at death



3. To remain “even as I” is to remain unmarried

4. But since both groups had previously enjoyed marriage remaining single may have been difficult to do because of their now unmet passions

So Paul says if they do not have control over their passions, they are to...

## **B. MARRY (V.9)**

But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

1. Marriage is for those who do not have self control over their sexual passions

2. They have a physical need to have their passions satisfied

3. Since God forbids sex outside of marriage, It is better to marry than to burn with passion

4. In two verses in 1 Timothy, Paul wanted young widows to marry

1. 1 Timothy 5:11 (NASB) But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard

of Christ, they want to get married

2. 1 Timothy 5:14 (NASB) Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach.

## 2

## To the Married (vv.10-11)

### A. THE WIFE (VV.10-11)

1. Should not leave her husband (v.10)
2. If she leaves, she must remain unmarried (v.11)
3. Or she should be reconciled to her husband (v.11)

### B. THE HUSBAND (V.11)

1. Should not divorce his wife

### C. MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE

Jesus said in Mark 10:9 (NASB) What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

God's will is that your marriage be for life and divorce not an option

But the Scripture does give two reasons for divorce:

## 1. Sexual immorality

1. Matthew 5:31-32 (NASB) “It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; 32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
2. Matthew 19:3-9 (NASB) 3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” 4 And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” 7 They \*said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?” 8 He \*said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

“If a Christian divorces another Christian except for adultery (see notes on Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:8, 9), neither partner is free to marry another person. They should reconcile, or at least remain unmarried.” (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.)

## 2. Unbelieving spouse departs (v.15)

### 3 To the Rest (vv.12-24)

#### BIBLE VERSE

12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. 15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. 16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

### **A. A HUSBAND IS NOT TO DIVORCE HIS UNBELIEVING WIFE (V.12)**

1. This refers to a husband who gets saved while his wife is still unbelieving
2. He is not to divorce her since she consents to live with him

### **B. A WIFE IS NOT TO DIVORCE HER UNBELIEVING HUSBAND (V.13)**

1. This is the same as verse 12 where a wife gets saved and her husband is still unbelieving
2. She is not to divorce him since he consents to live with her

### **C. UNBELIEVING SPOUSES ARE SANCTIFIED BY THE BELIEVING SPOUSE (V.14)**

1. The word “sanctified” does not refer to salvation; otherwise the spouse would not be spoken of as unbelieving.
2. It refers to being set apart, the basic meaning of sanctify and holy, terms that are from the same Greek root.
3. The sanctification is matrimonial and familial, not personal or spiritual.
4. In God’s eyes a home is set apart for Himself when the husband, wife, or, by implication, any other family member, is

a Christian.

5. Such a home is not Christian in the full sense, but it is immeasurably superior to one that is totally unbelieving.
6. Even if the Christian is ridiculed and persecuted, unbelievers in the family are blessed because of that believer.
7. One Christian in a home graces the entire home.
8. God's indwelling that believer and all the blessings and graces that flow into the believer's life from heaven will spill over to enrich all who are near.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

#### **D. IF AN UNBELIEVING SPOUSE LEAVES LET THEM LEAVE (VV.15)**

As stated earlier, there are only two reasons given in Scripture for divorce:

1. Sexual immorality

## 2. Desertion by an unbeliever

1. If an unbeliever desires to leave the marriage, “let him leave”

1. When an unbelieving spouse cannot tolerate the partner’s faith and wants a divorce, it is best to let that happen in order to preserve peace in the family (cf. Rom. 12:18). The bond of marriage is broken only by death (Rom. 7:2), adultery (Matt. 19:9), or an unbeliever’s leaving. (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.)

2. “The brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases”

1. When the bond is broken in any of those ways, a Christian is free to marry another believer. Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is assumed. When divorce is permitted, so is remarriage. By implication, the permission for a widow to remarry (vv. 39, 40; Rom. 7:3) because the “bond” is broken, extends to this case where there is no more “bondage.” (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.)

## E. REMAIN AS GOD CALLED YOU (VV.16-24)

1. You don't know if you're spouse will get saved (v.16)
2. Walk in this manner (vv.17-24)
  1. If circumcised stay circumcised (v.18)
  2. If uncircumcised stay uncircumcised (v.18-20)
  3. If a slave stay as a slave (v.21)
  4. If you can become free from slavery seek freedom (vv.21-24)

## 4

# Concerning Virgins (vv.25-40)

## A. IT IS GOOD TO BE SINGLE (VV.25-26)

25 Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. 26 I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

## B. IF MARRIED STAY MARRIED (V.27)

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.



### **C. IF YOU MARRY YOU HAVE NOT SINNED (VV.28-31)**

28 But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. 29 But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; 30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; 31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

### **D. BOTH SINGLENESS AND MARRIAGE HAVE CONCERNS (VV.32-34)**

32 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; 33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

1. The unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please Him (v.32)

2. The one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife (vv.33-34)

## **E. WHAT IS APPROPRIATE (VV .35-40)**

35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

### 1. Virgins can marry (v.36)

1. 36 But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

### 2. Virgins cannot marry (v.37)

1. 37 But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well.

### 3. Either case you are not sinning (v.38)

1. 38 So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in

marriage will do better.

4. But this is not so with one who is already married (v.39)

1. 39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

5. You are bound as long as your spouse lives, but if your spouse dies, you are “free to be married...only in the Lord”

6. In either case, Paul says he favors singleness (v.40)

1. 40 But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

## 5

# Conclusion

### APPLICATION

1. God has a plan for each one of us
2. And we are to serve Him in whatever manner that is
3. If it is singleness or marriage we are to be completely devoted to Him

4. Marriage and remarriage are to be only in the Lord
5. Virgins are allowed to marry
6. They are also allowed to remain as virgins
7. Whatever state God called you in remain unless you are a slave and you have been offered freedom
8. Both marriage and singleness have concerns
9. But both can serve the Lord even though in marriage interests are divided
10. As we conclude, remember that God ordained marriage
  1. It is between a man and a woman
  2. Divorce is only allowed under special circumstances: sexual immorality or unbeliever departs
11. Let's seek to honor God today whether we're married or single
12. If you're here today and you are not a Christian, I urge you to repent right now and surrender your life to Jesus Christ.

| 13. Let's pray.