

1 Cor 7:1-17
Glorify God in Marriage
Ryan Perz ~ September 20, 2020

Intro:

Over the summer we took a few weeks off from Acts and I did a mini-series on the fruit of the Spirit. This is the second mini-series I have planned.

- In Acts 18 we come to Paul's ministry in Corinth.
- This is a church Paul made a major investment in.

(Acts 18:11)

“¹¹ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

—Discipleship is made not in the abstract, but in the concrete real situations in life. Discipleship is not about escaping life's reality but engaging the calling the Lord has.

- We are going to take the next few weeks to look at the callings that God has in our lives—particularly marriage, singleness, and church life from Corinthians.

—The driving principle comes from a couple of verses.

(6:20) “Glorify God with your body.”

(10:31) “Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.”

Our highest motivations for living out life needs to start here.

The question we need to answer: how do we use our marriage, singleness, church life for God's glory?

Today: Glorify God in your marriage

—According to the Census Bureau, in 2018 only 35 percent of men, ages 25-34 were married. In 2005 it was 50 percent. There is a downward trend in marriage in general.

- The Bible does not either oversell marriage nor does it minimize the delight of it.

The Bible does not oversell marriage

(Gen. 3:16)—Your desire will be for your husband,
yet he will rule over you.

(Prov. 21:9)— It is better to live in a corner of the housetop
than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

(1 Cor 7:33)—marriage adds a layer of anxiety (e.g. instead of one sick person, there is now two; instead of one person's emotions, there are two).

The Bible does not oversell marriage. Marriage can be very difficult; places of friction, added anxiety.

Yet, the Bible does not minimize the delight marriage can be.

(Prov 5:18)—rejoice in the wife of your youth

(Ecc 9:9)⁹ Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun

(Eph 5)—presents a very idealized view of Christian marriage. Love, sacrifice, submission, respect.

Roles rightly understood....*and most importantly the gospel of Jesus put on display.*

- Now 1 Cor 7 gives some plain instruction on how to glorify God in marriage.
- There is nothing new, earth shattering. But it's the clear teaching God left in his Word for all marriages, all cultures, all ages, including our secular age where individualism and self-expression rule.

Traps to avoid in marriage (1-7)

Trap 1: Making too much of non-biblical wisdom

- (v1) Apparently some had been practicing physical abstinence in marriage.
- We are not told exactly why. It's possible that some thought they were more godly if they abstained. The Stoics, Cynics, and even some Jewish schools of thought viewed sexual abstinence as a means to wholeness and religious power. (Hayes)

Whatever the reason is, the problem is making too much of some non-biblical wisdom.

(Col 2:20-23)

²¹ "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" - according to human precepts and teachings?

²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, *but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*

- Now, there are times a couple may need to abstain, e.g. for health reasons or as it mentions in v5 for extended focus in prayer.
- Yet there will be mutual agreement. There is a Greek Word, *ex symphonou*, where you can hear a familiar English word: symphony.

In other words, the ideal marriage discussions and decisions are like a symphony. There is order, harmony, beauty.

- The wisdom from God's Word says that marriage intimacy is something to be enjoyed.

We need to beware of the trap of making too much of any non-biblical wisdom in marriage. People are tempted to go to all sorts of avenues—books, blogs, podcasts, friends. Dr Phil.

What forms of non-biblical marriage are we tempted to buy into?

Trap 2: Making too much of self in marriage

- The experts have reasons marriages fall apart. Some say communication. Other say finances. I think that every marriage failure has one key element—self. Self becomes king. Self takes the throne.

Look at another marriage texts: 1 Pet 3:7 (every husband need to memorize).

(v3-4) The point is that marriage involves putting the needs of another before your own. Instead of thinking that life exists for me, in marriage we learn that our life is tied up intimately to another.

Trap 3: Making too little of temptation

- The main reason that Paul addresses this issue is because he is concerned the door being opened into temptation.

Twice temptation is mentioned.

1. (v2) —The temptation is from the flesh
2. (v5)—so that Satan may not tempt you

Many of you may know at least one Christian marriage that has fallen apart because sexual purity was not a priority.

—I vividly recall having a friend sitting at our table during a holiday with a blank stare on his face...his wife had committed adultery and left him. Her dad was a pastor. He was training with me for ministry.

—I also vividly remember the Sunday in 1999 when the Sr. Pastor I looked up to in my church confessed before the whole church his involvement with prostitution.

We can never underestimate the power and pull of temptation, or the subtle nature of our spiritual enemy.

(1 Cor 10:12)

¹²Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

This marriage advice is for all. Newly married; decades-old marriages...the future marriages. If you have been getting trapped, flee from the traps through repentance.

There seems to be always at least one marriage in the church in trouble. Too much of self. Pornography has been allowed in. We glorify God in our marriage by avoiding and escaping traps.

One Lord to follow (10-16)

- The second instruction about marriage has to do with simply staying in the marriage.
- Most likely some Christians took a light view of their marriages. They essentially had a no-fault divorce culture. Divorce was so common in the culture that it was expected you divorced before your spouse died.
- The Bible does not portray marriage as a casual commitment, but a covenant to be kept. As God is a faithful-promise keeper, he expects his people to do it also.

“Faithfulness is the heart of marriage because it’s the heart of God” (*Married for God*, Christopher Ash)

(Prov 20:6)

⁶Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love,
but a faithful man who can find?

This teaching is not mere advice—it’s commanded by the Lord Jesus.

- Rarely does Paul appeal to Jesus—so there is an ethical weight being brought in (v10)

The command is straightforward enough: Christian married couples are not to seek to divorce one another.

Yet there is a broader-principle: Jesus is the main authority of marriage.

This is the greatest game-changer.

If we are Christians, our marriages are not ours—they are not autonomous, they exist for Jesus. Gifts to be used for his glory, under his authority.

I had an eye-opening experience early in my ministry. I admit that I was pretty naive going into pastoral ministry. I thought most professing Christians took Jesus’s commands at face value. I

assumed most held Jesus as their highest authority. My eye-opening moment was when a church member came over to our house late one night and unloaded in our living room all of the problems in her marriage.

Then she dropped this: she was considering leaving her husband. I pressed her if there were Biblical grounds. Her reply: her Christian counselor suggested it's the right thing to do.

The point of 1 Cor 7:10...we have one Lord to follow.

- We don't follow our feelings
- We don't follow mere marriage "advice"
- We don't follow a counselor as the main authority

We follow the Lord Jesus. That's what it means to confess Jesus is Lord. He is Lord of our marriages.

- Paul defaults to what Jesus says about the nature of marriage in the Gospels, which is pretty clear cut.

(Mk 10:9)

⁹What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Jesus's own teaching sets the bar very high. Marriage by his command is meant for life.

- I understand the word separate and divorce is communicating the same thing—ending of marriage. The word separate was used for divorce.
- If a Christian does initiate an illegitimate divorce, there are two options (v11): Remain unmarried; reconcile
- Finally, there is instruction to the rest—believers who have an unbelieving spouse.

—Those who knew the OT may have thought they found a way out...

(E.g. Ezra 10:11)—Separate from your foreign wives.

- If the unbeliever leaves—abandonment, the believer is not required to "stay in" (v15).

The Bible accounts for hard-hearts, unfaithfulness, brokenness in the world.

I would add that the Bible never requires or demands divorce. I know of couples where there were biblical grounds (from my understanding) for divorce where the marriage covenant was broken—yet one spouse was so committed to the gospel and demonstrated forgiveness and reconciliation.

The heart of God is always reconciliation. I would always urge attempts at reconciliation if possible.

Think of us—we are by nature covenant breakers. But God in his rich forbearance and mercy forgives and receives us.

The message of Hosea reminds us that God welcomes the unfaithful back.

Finally, if an unbeliever is willing to keep the marriage, the believer is to stay in.

Again,

Faithfulness is the heart of marriage, because it's the heart of God

Why? (v14, 16)

—Even if only one spouse believes, there is an influence of Christ in the home.

Conclusion

Al Mohler: “The ultimate purpose of marriage is the greater glory of God.”

That's great. But many don't have that experience. Many marriages, even Christian ones have been broken beyond repair. When I think about my almost two decades of marriage, I don't see myself as a husband of the year, but a sinner who daily needs God's grace.

And that is the final place we land. The same Lord we follow, is the Lord we get forgiveness and grace from.

Glorifying God in marriage begins by falling at the feet of Jesus, pleading for his grace.