

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XIX: *Marriage & Singleness—Gifts of God!*

TEXT: 1 Cor. 7:1-9 (NLT)

1 Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to live a celibate life.^[a] **2** But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

3 The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. **4** The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife.

5 Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. **6** I say this as a concession, not as a command. **7** But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. But God gives to some the gift of marriage, and to others the gift of singleness.

8 So I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. **9** But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust.

Footnotes:

a. # 1 Corinthians 7:1 Greek *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

OVERVIEW

In 1 Corinthians chapter 7, Paul turns his attention to several questions sent to him by the Corinthians. He continues to address these questions through chapter 11. The first of the questions concerns marriage and celibacy. In chapter 7, Paul gives advice to marriage couples (vv1-16), the unmarried (vv 25-38), and the widowed (vv 39-40). All three are addressed in verses 17-24. Since relationships are foundational to the growth and success of the church, we would all do well to heed the underlying principles here.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. What can we learn from this passage about the sort of extra-biblical ideas circulating at the time? (cf. vv1b, 5)
2. Why do you suppose some Christians thought it best not to marry? (vs. 1)
3. What are some of the practical spiritual benefits of marriage? (vv 2, 9)
4. Taking a deeper look at verses 3-5, what do these verses reveal about the *give-and-take* nature of the Christian marital relationship? Would one marriage partner behaving in a domineering, overbearing, and inconsiderate manner be consistent with God's blueprint for marriage? (cf. Ephesians 5:21-33)
5. In verses 6, Paul says, "I say this by way of concession and not demand." How should we take this? As Paul's opinion on temporal issues of importance to the Corinthians or as a divine directive applicable to all people of all times? (NOTE: *We will explore this particular question in greater depth in a future study.*)
6. According to verse 7, God gives some the "gift" of marriage and some the "gift" of singleness. What are the practical implications of this concept?