

## 1 Corinthians 7 – Chapter Study

### INTRO -- III. Main Body 1:18-16:18

**A. God's Way vs. the World's Way 1:18-2:16**

**B. Disunity Chs. 3-4**

**C. Immorality Chs. 5-6**

**D. Marriage Ch. 7**

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Marriage is a marvelous relationship that's given comedians an endless source of humor.

Henny Youngman said –

Men - Do you know what it means to come home at night to a woman who'll give you a little love, a little attention and affection, a little tenderness? — It means you're in the wrong house.

Some people ask the secret of our long marriage. We take time to go to a restaurant 1 times a week. A little candlelight, dinner, soft music and dancing. — She goes Tuesdays, I go Fridays.

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#### **<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:**

The Corinthians had written Paul asking about *several* topics which he deals with now in the rest of the letter.

The first issue he deals with is marriage, & we can tell from all he says here they'd asked a lot of questions; about marriage, divorce, remaining single, & sex.

#### **<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.***

Paul is being *delicate*; “To touch a woman” was a polite euphemism for *sexual intercourse*.

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As we begin to dig in to what Paul has to say in this chapter, we need to remember what kind of place Corinth was.

Immorality ruled the streets & dominated the culture.

If you've ever walked down the sidewalk in Las Vegas & been harassed by the people passing out handbills you have a bit of an idea what Corinth was like.

Remember – Corinth was a Greek city & had several academies of Greek philosophy.

According to Greek thought – while the immaterial, spiritual part of man was good, the physical was unalterably evil.

2 reactions thus developed toward the body:

One group totally indulged their passions while the other reined them in and denied all pleasure.

As this related to sex, some indulged promiscuously, while others abstained entirely, *even if they were married*.

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So Paul begins by saying that for believers, sex is something that came under the influence & direction of the Spirit.

The basic principle that ought to guide the sexual ethics of God's people is – “Hands off.”

But he's not finished – there's a whole lot more to be said . . .

#### **<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.**

The proper outlet for the God-ordained & installed sex drive is marriage.

Paul does not disparage sex. He simply confines it to the place it was designed for – the relationship of a husband & wife.

Paul wants to make sure his initial “hands-off” comment isn't misunderstood, so he elaborates on the *appropriateness* of sex in marriage.

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**<sup>3</sup> Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.**

He's still being discreet in his use of the term "affection" as a reference to physical love, so he makes it a bit more explicit -

**<sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*.**

Paul's meaning in context is clear: he's speaking of marital sex. The wife's body is for the delight & satisfaction of her husband. This is how *his* sexual desire is to be consummated.

While Paul's mention of the wife's body being under her husband's authority was understood as a given in the Greco-Roman culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, what he says next was absolutely stunning, simply because it was unheard of.

**And likewise [in the very same way] the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.**

Paul brings total sexual parity between husbands & wives.

Just as the wife's body is meant to bring sexual satisfaction to the husband, his body is to bring sexual satisfaction to her!

Coupling this with verse 3 (pun intended) Paul says that both husbands & wives are to make sure their mate is finding sexual satisfaction *within the marriage*.

And they're to do this because of v. 2 – the problem of sexual immorality.

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The sex drive is strong & this fallen world is extremely adept at knowing how to tempt us.

One of the most effective ways to battle that temptation is for husbands & wives to make sure their spouse is sexually satisfied.

Look -

**<sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**

This answered a question they'd asked about whether or not married believers ought to abstain from sex. Some of them had swallowed the Greek idea that the way to deal with the body & physical desires was to deny them & abstain from all pleasure.

It seemed *disciplined* & somehow *holy* to deny themselves normal sexual relationship with their mates.

Paul says, "No! Don't go down that path. Don't *deprive* one another."

A husband or wife is not to withhold sexual gratification from their mate.

Sex must never be used as a *weapon* or as a means of *manipulation*.

There's an exception to this & that's if BOTH the husband & wife agree to abstain for a time of fasting & prayer.

Of course this makes perfect sense; the point of fasting is to *deny the flesh*, so sexual pleasure must also be halted.

But notice that there's a limit to this; it's "for a time" & is to be "by consent."

So they're *not depriving* each other; they're just abstaining for a set time.

THEN, they're to *make it a point* to return to a normal, healthy sexual relationship.

**<sup>6</sup> But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. <sup>7</sup> For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.**

While Paul was single when he penned this, many scholars believe he'd been married at one time. Here's why . . .

In the Book of Acts he appears to have been a member of the *Sanhedrin* & one of their requirements was marriage.

While there were notable exceptions in the history of Israel, it was mostly an accepted part of Jewish custom to be married because God told Adam & Eve to be fruitful & multiply.

An unmarried Jew was said to have *killed his posterity* & to have diminished the image of God in the world by failing to produce offspring.

If Paul had been married at one time, *what* happened to his wife is a mystery.

She may have died or she may have left him when he became a follower of Jesus.

Jewish divorce laws were fairly liberal & Paul would have been considered an *apostate*.

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But in order to understand what Paul says here, we need to take a look at the entire chapter & it's context.

In v. 29, he says, "The time is short." He believed he was living in the last days.

In v. 26 he speaks of "The present distress." Christians faced increasing persecution. Paul was certain it was going to get worse, as it soon did.

He knew that married people & especially couples with children, would be hardest hit & have greater difficulty.

So he says, "I wish that all men were even as I myself," meaning single.

But this is merely *his preference*; not everyone can *be* single, because as he says -

**But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.**

This is an important point = Both marriage & celibacy are gifts from God & each believer must in faith receive the gift God gives him/her.

In Gen. 2 it's clear God's *general* will is marriage.

That's made clear in v., 18 which records God's own announcement – "It is not good that the man is alone." The solution is a life-long companion; a spouse.

Marriage is God's means for solving the problem of loneliness.

**But** God gives *some* the *gift of celibacy*.

Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 19:11-12.

He'd been teaching on the sanctity of marriage & told the disciples divorce is not allowed in *any* case except adultery.

The disciples were flabbergasted because the divorce laws of their time were far more liberal & allowing.

They said that if divorce was prohibited in all but adultery, it would be better never to marry!

Jesus responded with this,

**All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.**

Of course, those who can accept celibacy are as Jesus said, the ones to whom it has been given.

Paul echoes that thought here.

So, *how* does someone determine which gift he/she has – the call to marriage or celibacy?

Read on . . .

**<sup>8</sup> But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; <sup>9</sup> but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.**

"Unmarried" is a precise word meaning those who had at one time *been married* but have become single.

"Widows" are *one category* of such "unmarried" people.

So Paul is speaking to those who have *become single*. He tells them to follow his example - stay single!

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That is, **unless** they find the celibate life too big a sexual struggle. Then they're to marry.

And that gives us our clue as to how to discern our calling to be married or single.

If a believer finds his/her **need** for companionship is fully satisfied in the context of the Body of Christ & in their relationship with the Lord, then it's a sure indication they're called to be celibate - single.

But if their sexual desire puts them **under pressure** so that they **long for the companionship** of someone of the opposite sex, then they need to realize their gift & calling is marriage, & they need to carefully & wisely pursue that course.

In light of the calling of God it's improper for the one called to be celibate to seek marriage, just as it's wrong for the one called to be married to seek to be celibate.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, Ambrose of Milan set the course for Roman Catholic clergy by taking a vow of celibacy.

His journal chronicles the struggle he had with sexual temptation over the years. He was continually stumbled by it

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On the other hand - for a long time, people have put singles under **pressure** to get married.

It's not uncommon for singles to hear such statements as,

“So, when are you getting married?”

“Don't you want to be married? Really, why not?”

“Are you seeing anyone? Is it serious?”

Paul **confirms** the celibate-single lifestyle to those called to it.

He **commends** it to those who have **become** single.

The church ought to affirm it as well!

Singles provide a resource for ministry married people can't because of the obligations marriage brings.

**<sup>10</sup> Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. <sup>11</sup> But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.**

One of the questions they'd asked was should a Christian married to an unbeliever **leave** him or her.

As a rabbi, Paul knew well the teaching of both the OT & Jesus on marriage.

Marriage is sacred & not to be broken.

“Depart” is literally ‘to leave the place of,’ & in this context means divorce; to forsake the marriage covenant.

In Matthew 19:6 Jesus said, “What God has **joined together**, let not man **separate**.”

Married people are not to divorce. BUT – as is our habit, we often do what we ought not.

So, Paul adds – “If she **does depart**, let her remain unmarried **or** be reconciled to her husband.”

As we probably all know from personal experience, in this area of marriage, divorce, & re-marriage, while people discover God's counsel, they often decide to do something different.

The rules that ought to apply to **everyone else** become fuzzy when it comes to **my** situation.

And Paul, being the realist he is, adds a word of **caution** to those who blow off the prohibition of divorce.

He says, “Don't compound your error by remarrying; stay single or be reconciled!”

Why? Because if they marry someone else, they'd be committing **adultery**.

Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 19:9 – “I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

According to Jesus, there's only one case in which God grants a divorce—adultery.

Otherwise, in God's eyes, a couple is **still married**.

They may have a paper from a civil court that says they're divorced but in God's eyes, they're still married.

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So, if they marry someone else, they're in fact *now* committing adultery. For those who divide for any reason *other than adultery*, Paul says they have 2 options: Stay apart or be reconciled.

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Vs. 10 & 11 were simply Paul's *application* of the Scriptures.

Now he's going to extend the principle of the sanctity of marriage to something the Scripture doesn't speak directly to.

**12 But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.**

Paul is *not* disclaiming the inspiration of the Spirit as he writes this.

He's simply marking a *distinction* between vs. 10 & 11 which were drawn direct form the scriptures detailing the sanctity of marriage & his counsel here which is drawn indirectly from that.

They'd asked him about whether believers ought to divorce their unbelieving spouses.

He says, "No. Stay! Your marriage is still sacred in the eyes of God."

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Vs. 14, 15, 16 are an unusual construction that it would be easier for us to interpret by linking v. 15 to 13 and 14 to 16.

**15 – But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.**

While Jesus allowed divorce in the event of adultery, Paul *adds* abandonment by an unbeliever as permissible causes of divorce.

Now, before we take offense at his audacity, we need to realize that Paul was drawing from his expert & anointed understanding of the scriptures & what marriage really is.

In case you're not aware, Paul's teaching on marriage is the highest, the loftiest in all of the Bible.

He sees it as far more than just the convenient union of a man & woman.

In Ephesians 5, Paul says marriage is THE picture of what all of creation is about.

So let's not be hard on him here because he extends the list of allowable causes of divorce.

His reasoning goes like this - Marriage is a *covenant of companionship*.

*Adultery* violates this covenant for obvious reasons.

It's a breach of the loyal intimacy that's to be the hallmark of marriage.

In like manner, *abandonment* breaks the exclusive companionship that's at the heart of the marriage covenant.

When Paul says that the believer is "not under bondage" when they've been abandoned, he means they're *released* from the covenant.

And if their released from the covenant, they're *free* to remarry.

But hold on – as he's already said in v. 8 = they ought to seriously consider remaining single, if they can without placing themselves in danger because of immorality.

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Paul ends v. 15 with this important *reason* for his counsel -

**God has called us to peace.**

Before that he said,

**If the unbeliever departs, let him depart**

Meaning → "Offer no opposition."

While Paul had an ultra high view of it, he knew a believer cannot make an unbelieving spouse live the life of faith.

So he tells believers to let unbelieving mates go if they *want out* of the marriage; they're to offer no resistance. They're not to fight, bicker, kick, scream; they're to let them go.

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Because God has called us to peace, & there can be no peace in the home if there is anger & resentment between a husband & wife where the one who is lost wants out.

The unbeliever may depart, but in vs. 14 & 16, Paul gives the reason why *Christians* are not to leave a mixed marriage.

**14 – For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.**

**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?**

“Sanctified” is one of those highly religious sounding words that simply means to be set apart from what is common to the special work & service of God.

Paul isn’t saying that a wife’s faith will somehow save her husband or a husband’s faith save his wife. He means God has *special access* to the unbeliever married to a believer.

The believing spouse is going to be praying for their salvation.

There far more opportunity for the unbeliever to see the work of God’s Spirit & grace.

God’s blessing on His son or daughter will speak to the lost one.

This same principle applies to the raising of children.

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**17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.**

Paul wants to make sure the Corinthians understand what he’s saying.

Each of them has to seek God, walk in the Spirit, understand what their calling is – & be faithful right there.

This is what he taught everywhere.

**18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**

They’d written to ask about how best to serve God -

Should they divorce unbelievers so they can better serve the Lord?

Should they get out of a difficult marriage so they’d be free of that impediment?

His answer was a resounding, “No!”

But *more than that*, he sees the question as *proof* of their lack of proper spiritual perspective.

He knew human nature, how we tend to think that all we need to make things better is a *change of scenery*.

We think if we could just *change our circumstances*, then we’d be happy.

But the problem is usually *within* us, not *around* us.

People change their circumstances trying to get away from their problems, only to discover that their problems follow them.

They think the problem is their job or their boss, so they quit and start a new job, only to discover that one is just as bad.

The real problem isn’t the job, it’s their attitude toward authority.

They think they have a bad marriage, so they divorce & remarry, only to wish they had their first mate back.

The problem isn’t their lousy mate, it’s their own selfishness.

What Paul says here is a *foundational principle* of the Christian life;

Bloom where you’re planted!

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Be a *Christian* where you are.

Live for God now, as you're called.

Don't put off being used by God to some *later date* when your circumstances change.

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Now, let's look at v. 18 more closely because it seems rather odd –

**Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.**

The Jews practiced circumcision while most of the rest of the world didn't.

Might seem like no big deal since we assume it was kept pretty private, until we realize athletics were a central fixture in Greco-Roman culture.

And when athletes competed, they did so *naked*.

It was obvious who was Jewish when they stripped down & simply because of the physical difference, they were made the objects of scorn & ridicule.

Many Jewish men were embarrassed & wanting to fit in to the Gentile world they submitted to surgery to reverse their circumcision.

The Roman historian Celsus gives a detailed description of this medical procedure.

Rabbinic writings from the time *deplored* it for obvious reasons.

Some Jewish Christians thought that since Christ fulfilled the law, it would be better to be *uncircumcised*.

Paul says, "Don't bother."

Conversely, some Gentiles believers who thought they ought to seek circumcision because it marked God's covenant with Abraham.

Paul says again, "Forget it."

The point is, a person doesn't have to renounce their ethnic or racial background when becoming a follower of Christ.

For years, missionaries went to other lands to share Christ but mistakenly thought their flavor or expression of the faith was the only Biblical one.

They made their converts change their dress, customs, sometimes even their language.

They forgot that being a witness for Christ means being like Him and He became one of us.

<sup>20</sup> **Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.**

There it is plainly. However we came to faith in Christ, that is how & where we ought to serve Him.

Of course, Paul doesn't mean if someone is involved in an immoral occupation or circumstance they should *continue* in it.

Genuine faith is accompanied by repentance of sin.

If a drug dealer gets saved, bloom where you're planted doesn't mean he ought to be a Christian drug dealer.

If a dancer at Spearmint Rhino gets saved, bloom where you're planted doesn't mean that she ought to continue dancing.

Paul also isn't denying the blessing of God or the future direction of the Spirit.

It's to be expected that as the years pass & we continue to walk with God that God ordained opportunities will arise.

Paul says we're not to *agitate* for change.

We're not to think we can only live for God if we get out of our present situation.

<sup>21</sup> **Were you called *while* a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use *it*.** <sup>22</sup> **For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called *while* free is Christ's slave.**

Here was another issue that posed a huge challenge in the early church—Slavery.

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There were bold, clear lines of distinction in society between - Slave & free, Wealthy & poor, Men & women.

The Church was the one place where all people met on an even level.

When they met they all sat side by side & worshiped God

This gave rise to a problem in some places.

Some slaves were getting uppity & slacking off.

They *agitated* for freedom as *due* them because they & their masters were brothers in Christ.

What complicated matters is that several slave-owners who'd become Christians *had* set their slaves free.

Imagine the effect **THAT** had on the rest of society!!!

It scared the bejeebers out of *unbelievers* because they saw it as a dangerous trend that could upset the *entire economic base* of the Empire.

And it angered the believers who still had slaves because it made them look bad.

Paul says to slaves – “Live as you are called!”

Though in human society you're a slave, in Christ you're free!

And those who in the world are free, are in the Spirit the subjects & servants of Christ.

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In v. 21 Paul does encourage slaves who have the opportunity to be free to take advantage of it.

In the Roman Empire, slaves *could* gain their freedom.

Though most of their time was spent serving their master, they did have some free time.

Many spent this time making & selling small items.

The money they earned was taken to a local temple where it was deposited with the priest.

Once the slave had enough, he or she would bring their master to the temple, where the priest would give him the money as their redemption price.

Then, in a *figurative* sense, the slave became the *property of the god*.

That's the picture Paul uses in v. 23 -

**<sup>23</sup> You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.**

The redemption price Jesus paid was His blood.

We belong to Him, so our lives are lived at His direction.

**<sup>24</sup> Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.**

3 times now he's said this same thing - Bloom where we are planted!

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Now he turns to another question they'd asked -

**<sup>25</sup> Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.**

Nearly all marriages at that time were arranged by the parents.

The previous verses dealt with personal choices of marriage or staying single.

Now the question is, “What about our kids? Do we forego setting them up & enforce celibacy on them or what?”

Virgins here means a unmarried daughters.

Paul makes it clear that his counsel on this issue is not drawn explicitly from Scripture.

As before, it comes from godly principles.

**<sup>26</sup> I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress— that it is good for a man to remain as he is:**

The counsel is consistent to what we just read – live as you're called.

But here we have an added reason for such counsel – “the present distress.”

The word means ‘crushing stress’; a ‘significant calamity.’

Persecution was just then coming to a fevered pitch in various places around the Empire.

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A few years after this letter was written, Nero came to Rome's throne.

He was diabolical in his persecution of believers, and some Scholars believe he may have been demon possessed.

He would sew up believers in raw animals skins then throw them to a pack of wild dogs.

He would clothe them in garments soaked in wax, tie them to the tops of poles placed around his garden, light them on fire as lights in the night so he could ride his chariot.

But already, when Paul penned this, in various places Christians were being arrested, their goods confiscated, their families broken up & sold into slavery.

They were imprisoned, beaten, tortured, & in a few cases executed.

In many more places, if persecution wasn't so violent, it was a more subtle form of prejudice that banned tradesmen from work & merchants from trading.

In light of that kind of stress, parents needed to think long & hard before marrying off their children.

**27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed.**

Because of what he'd said before; marriage is sacred.

**Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.**

Because in the present time of challenge, marriage adds to the already high level of stress.

**28 But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.**

Marriage is good, marriage is part of God's plan for most people.

But – be wise! Wake up & smell the coffee – These are tough times & marriage only makes them tougher.

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Paul is NOT disparaging marriage here. He's simply being a *realist*

**29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, <sup>30</sup> those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, <sup>31</sup> and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.**

The best way to explain this is to use an example.

Years ago when our 2 boys were young, Tyrell made a large fort with some blocks in the family room.

He was quite excited by it & proudly showed it off Lynn & I.

Then along came his older brother Luke & you can guess what happened, Luke decided to *remodel* it.

Tyrell totally lost it & went off on his brother.

Lynn & I were stoked by Tyrell's creativity, but our excitement was more for *his sake* than actual joy.

After all, his fort was in the middle of the floor & would have to be cleaned up within a couple hours.

We were sad at his loss when Luke decided to play King Kong, but again, our sorrow was more for Tyrell's sake than for any real sense of loss.

Our emotions & reaction were tempered by the transitory nature of what he'd spent so much time & energy on.

It's a sign of spiritual maturity to be able to step back from the cares of this life & see it all from the eternal perspective.

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Paul is not calling people to be totally dispassionate or to neglect their spouses.

That's silly because it would contradict what he's just said!

What he means is that marriage & all our circumstances must not be seen as an end unto themselves.

There's a larger story & work going on of which we must be mindful & purposeful and realize that one day, sooner rather than later, our individual part in that story will be over.

Don't let the temporal eclipse the eternal.

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**<sup>32</sup> But I want you to be without care.**

Or – “I want you to be without unnecessary burden.”

**He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please *his* wife. <sup>34</sup>**

**There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please *her* husband.**

By ‘world’ Paul doesn’t mean ‘worldly’ – he means it in the sense he’s just used it in v. 31 = temporal & passing.

Paul’s pointing out the obvious; when a person doesn’t have family responsibilities, he/she is freer to serve God.

The married person ought to invest time & energy into the marriage, seeking to be a blessing to their mate.

**<sup>35</sup> And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.**

The bottom line was that they might serve the Lord w/o distraction.

So he has no one-rule fits all kind of leash to inflict on them.

If someone has the gift of celibacy – then the single life is the best way to serve God.

If a person doesn’t have the gift of celibacy, then the desire for companionship IS going to be distraction and they ought to marry so they can see that need met & be released to serve God through their marriage.

**<sup>36</sup> But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, [daughter] if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry.**

In the Greco-Roman world, fathers had a total control of their daughters lives.

But they needed to heed what he’d said earlier about calling.

If a father wanted to devote his daughter to a celibate life, that’s fine.

But if when she came of age & it was clear she didn’t have the gift of celibacy, he ought to arrange for her marriage.

Some fathers would “**vow**” their daughters to celibacy.

Paul makes it clear that it would not be wrong to end that vow if the daughter should be married.

**<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity,**

That’s referring to the daughter – she comes of age and has no urge to be married -

**but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well.**

The situation here is a father who vowed his daughter to celibacy and when she came of age indicates no a gifting to remain single, the father ought to stick with his original commitment, even if some appealing suitor comes knocking.

One of the ways people could rise in rank & society was by marrying their children to people of a higher prestige.

This would prove a great temptation – so Paul says, “Stick you your vow.”

Very simply, Paul is speaking about a father making up his mind on what is best for his daughter

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The critical issue in all of this is the calling of the young woman.

**<sup>38</sup> So then he who gives *her* in marriage does well, but he who does not give *her* in marriage does better.**

For the reasons he’s spelled out in the previous verses; single people are freer to serve the Lord.

**<sup>39</sup> A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. <sup>40</sup> But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God.**

Paul concludes with some comments to widows.

Death severs the bonds of marriage.

Marriage is a temporary solution to the problem of loneliness.

Contrary to what some of the cults teach, there is no marriage in heaven.

So Paul says that a Christian widow is free to remarry, as long as the one she marries is a Christian.

But he would encourage widows to consider the single life before they plunge back into marriage.