

Marriage and Singleness- Gifts From God

7:1 Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry (literally to touch or fasten to). 2 But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. **6 I say this as a concession, not as a command.** 7 I wish that all men were as I am. ***But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.***

8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

10 To the married I give this command (***not I, but the Lord***): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. 12 To the rest I say this (***I, not the Lord***): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

17 ***Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.*** 18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. ***Keeping God's commands is what counts.*** 20 ***Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him.*** 21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you-although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

25 Now about virgins: **I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.** 26 Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. 27 Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

29 What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; 30 those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; 31 those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

32 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs-how he can please the Lord. 33 But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world-how he can please his wife- 34 and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world-how she can please her husband. 35 **I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.**

36 If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. 37 But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin-this man also does the right thing. 38 So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.

39 A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. 40 **In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is-and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.**

Lessons from Chapter 7

1. First, of love to God. The body is made for the Lord. We learned that last week, and, therefore, what the Lord wants you to do with your body should be all-compelling. It should govern what your decisions are.
2. The second ingredient in sexual happiness is a discipline of self -- a willingness to put your own needs second to those of your mate in this area, and to give yourself, to give the gift of beauty and love and fulfillment to one another continually.
3. A good marriage, of course, always has a husband and wife giving gifts to one another. We have certain times of the year when everybody does it so it is easy to get on the bandwagon. You give a gift on your anniversary, and you give a gift on your wife's birthday, hopefully, and you give a gift, perhaps, on Mother's Day and other times. But the best marriages are made up of husbands and wives who are always giving gifts to each other -- buying little trinkets here, bringing home something from a trip, your eye being caught by something in a market or a bargain store or whatever that you think your mate will enjoy, and getting it. That is a way of saying to your mate, "I'm thinking of you. You are important to me. I love you." The greatest gift along that line is sex if it is given with that same spirit of joy and thanksgiving and gratitude and willingness to give pleasure. Nothing is more important than that, but it calls for a refusal to indulge in self and self-satisfaction. The third ingredient, therefore, is mutual respect for one another.