

Sex In Marriage – 1 Cor 7:1-9

1 Cor 7:1-9; As we continue to work our way through 1 Corinthians, Paul now turns his attention to marriage matters
And we're going to find that he addresses things like sex, divorce, remarriage, and singleness – issues then and issues now

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. 7 I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. 8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. 9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Intro (v1)

Paul has just finished addressing one extreme of sex in ch6, sexual license . . .

When he now turns to the other – sexual abstinence

This one, as a result of a letter that the church sent him

You see that in v1 when he says – *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote*

It's like he just finished saying all the things that were on his mind, and now turns to address the things on theirs – one of which was the issue of sex in marriage
Which you see in the quote to which he refers – *“It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”*

- Now, some people have interpreted that quote as Paul's *own* position
Which would mean that he sees marriage as a concession to singleness and celibacy
It's an interpretation that has led to all kinds of errant beliefs and practices – like monasteries, or religious leaders who can't be married

The problem, in seeing v1 as Paul's thought, is that it's not only contrary to the flow of the text as we'll see . . .
But it flies in the face of other Scriptures like Gen 2:18, where it says – *it is not good for man to be alone*
So if *Paul* is speaking here, instead of quoting the Corinthians, he would be contradicting that; He'd be saying – “no, it is good for man to be alone”

Not only that, but he'd be speaking against his *own* instruction in Eph 5 where he *affirms* that a husband and wife should become one flesh

So advocating as some people have in times past, that *Paul* is speaking in v1 instead of the Cor's, doesn't fit
It doesn't fit with what he teaches elsewhere, it doesn't fit the flow of the text . . .
And it contradicts what he says about marriage later on in the chapter

Like in v38 when he says that *he who marries his betrothed does well*

How can a person who has sex do *well*, when it's supposedly good *not* to?

Or how can he tell people to remain married in v10-16, when sex is supposedly bad?

- He can't; And he doesn't
Which is why I think the ESV translators get it right here in putting the statement in v1 in quotes – indicating that the *Cor's* were speaking, not Paul

And given Paul's response in the following verses, they were essentially saying . . .

“Hey Paul, since you're not married, and since sexual immorality is so bad, and since we're one in spirit with Christ anyway (6:17)” . . .

“We think it's best to refrain from *all* sex, even in marriage”

That's what they were getting at

And Paul wastes no time in going directly to the core of the issue . . .

Saying first of all in v2 – *But* [that is, contrary to what you just said] *because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.* IOW . . .

Sex in marriage is a necessity (v2)

A necessity b/c of the temptation of sexual immorality – that's what the first part of the verse says

A temptation that comes from within as a result of our *own* sin nature . . .

A temptation that comes from without as a result of the fallen world around us . . .

And a temptation, as we'll see later, that comes from Satan himself

Sex in marriage is a necessity b/c we are literally barraged from all directions with the temptation to indulge in sexual immorality; It's unavoidable
You couldn't escape it if you locked yourself in a closet the rest of your life

- And I say, “in marriage,” that is, sex *in marriage* is a necessity . . .
B/c when Paul says *each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband* . . .
He's not saying that each and every person should *get* married – but that those who are, should have sex; they should enjoy sexual relations

Otherwise he would be contradicting what he says a little later in v7 – that *each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another*
Referring to the gifts of marriage and singleness
So he can't mean in v2 that every person should get married

Rather, he's saying that those who are, should have sex – b/c that's what the phrase *have his own wife* meant in that day
It was a common expression, meaning “to have sexually” or “to be in continuing sexual relationship with”

In fact, Paul uses it that way in **5:1**; That's where he says . . .

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

Obviously meaning that he's having sex with her *****

- So in 7:2 Paul is saying that b/c of sexual temptations . . .
Each man who is already married, should continue in sexual relations with his wife . . .
And each wife should continue in sexual relations with her husband

It's not only God's primary way of knitting us together as one flesh . . .
And ensuring a linking of our souls . . .
But it's a necessity to help us avoid sexual immorality

Not only that, but it's a duty as well; That's what he gets at in v3-4

Sex in marriage is a duty (v3-4)

Not a duty of drudgery, at least it shouldn't be, but a duty of delight
A duty borne out of a *love* for one another, and a desire to *please* one another
But a duty nonetheless

That's the idea when Paul says in v3 – *The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.*

Conjugal referring to sexual; Meaning that each spouse has a *right* to be sexually satisfied in marriage . . .

And the opposite spouse has an *obligation/duty* to satisfy that right; to meet that desire
That's what *should give* means – it's a phrase of obligation that was normally used for paying bills

- And notice here that it's a *mutual* thing, a mutual duty
Sex is not just the *husband's* privilege and the wife's *obligation*; It's both/and
Which means, husbands – your wife is not your concubine of convenience
Yes, it's her duty to satisfy your privilege and desires when it comes to sex . . .
But it's also *your* duty to satisfy *her* privilege and desires

And I think Paul mentions the husband's responsibility *first* here in v3 – that *the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights*, b/c it's lost on most men

We don't tend to think very clearly on this issue, and most guys don't tend to think about *her* needs at all

But I guarantee you, if you put your *wife's* needs/desires ahead of your own when it comes to sex – she will knock your socks off

While anything else will leave you wanting – even if she *does* fulfill her duty
It's a mutual thing

- The basis for which Paul gives us in v4, where he says . . .
For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.
Sex in marriage carries with it a mutual duty to satisfy one another, based on mutual *ownership*

When you get married, you give up your right to do what you please with your body
You give it up; And you give it *to*, your spouse

Husbands, you are hers – she has full authority over your body in the marriage bed
And wives, you are his – he has full authority over your body in the marriage bed
Not to do things that are disagreeable to one or the other – that wouldn't be loving

But rather, to mutually satisfy each other, or please each other, in all things at all times

That's your duty in marriage – a loving, other-oriented, mutual duty . . .

That should never be withheld

Sex in marriage should never be withheld (v5-6)

V5 very clearly says – *Do not deprive one another*; Don't withhold sex from one another
That means don't use it as a bargaining chip, and don't use it as a means of manipulation

Now, that doesn't mean you shouldn't have fun with it, or flirt with each other

You should; It creates anticipation and makes sexual intimacy that much better

But never should you withhold it b/c your husband didn't take out the *trash*

Or b/c your wife got in a fender-bender; *Do not deprive one another*

- On the other hand husbands, if you *treat* your wife like trash, that's a different story
Even if she still has sex with you, you'll miss out; B/c it will only be that – sex
It won't be love, or her expression of it to you, or anything close

You can't expect your wife to respond, or *desire* you in any sense of the word . . .

If you treat her like your sex slave, only good for the bed, and nothing else

Sex with her should be the culmination of your loving *relationship*, not a cheap means to gratify yourself

Meanwhile wives, if you treat your husband like *he* was the accident, like you should have never married him – chances are he will withdraw from you as well
In which case you're depriving him

Sex in marriage should *never* be withheld, and *always* be pursued, in the context of a loving relationship and a desire for *mutual* satisfaction

- *Except* by mutual consent – that's the only caveat
5 – *Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer*
That's the concession he's talking about in v6 right after that – *Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.*

IOW he *allows* for a pause in sexual relations, contrary to what he's just said, but he doesn't command it – you don't have to

You don't *have* to stop having sex in order to devote yourself to prayer

But you can if you want to; And then, only if *both* of you want to, and both of you pray

That's what it says – *that you may devote yourselves to prayer*; plural

You can press pause on your sexual intimacy if *both* of you agree to it and *both* of you pray – for a limited time

But then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Don't refrain for very long, and if one of u changes your mind halfway through, so be it

B/c Satan is an opportunist, and he's looking for any way he can possibly tempt you, and gain a foothold in your life . . .

By capitalizing on your sexual desires and lack of self-control

Which is yet another reason why sex in marriage should never be withheld

[sex in marriage should never be withheld]

In fact, it s/b regular, ongoing, pleasurable, and pure – 4 words that should describe your sex life in marriage

- Regular and ongoing (**Prov 5:19**) as in– *Let her breasts fill you* [satisfy you] at all times with delight; be intoxicated *always* in her love.

Satisfied at *all* times; Intoxicated *always* in her love; That's regular and ongoing

And pleasurable as in **Song of Solomon 7:11-13** where the wife says to her husband . . .

Come my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages; let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love. The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.

Poetic imagery and suggestive metaphors that describe the treasures and pleasures of sex in marriage *****

It s/b regular, ongoing, pleasurable, and *pure*

Heb 13:4 says – *let the marriage bed be undefiled*; That is, keep it pure

Don't corrupt it by having sex with someone else, and don't pollute it with impure thoughts or fantasies

B/c it's a necessity, it's a duty, and it should never be w/held or shared w/ someone else

But it's not for everyone

Sex and marriage is not for everyone (v7-9)

Sex *in* marriage is, but not sex *and* marriage

When Paul says in v7 – *I wish that all were as I myself am* . . .

The implication is that singleness and celibacy is a good thing

Something he says explicitly in the very next verse, v8 – *To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am.*

It's good; Singleness and celibacy is good; And in some cases it's preferred

That's what he says in the first part of v7, and v8

But in between, in 7b, he says – *But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.*

Meaning, that while it's *good* to be single, it's not for everyone . . .

And while it's good to be married, *it's* not for everyone

Each situation or preference is a gift – a God-given inclination and ability, to excel in a certain area of life or ministry

Some people have the gift of being *single* and happy, while others have the gift of being *married* and happy; We're not all wired the same

Nor are you better or worse if you're in one camp or the other

Both are God-given inclinations that enable us to lead our God-given lives . . .

And both require contentment if you're to experience great gain as Paul says in 1 Tim 6

Even if you're in one boat, and wish you were in the other

Contentment is the key no matter what your gift, whether it's being fulfilled or not

- And one of the clues to your gift is not only your passion and desire for sexual intimacy, or lack thereof – but your ability, or lack thereof, to exercise control over it

B/c in v9 he says – *If they* [referring to those who are single] *cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

It's better to marry and live as God intended, than fight it and be miserable

But if you *don't* burn with passion, and you *can* exercise self-control, it may very well be that you should remain single – it's one of the indicators *****

But it's not for everyone, and neither is marriage and the sexual intimacy that goes along with it

But if it *is* for you, or you're already married – make sure you give sex its proper place

Pray – Redeem, restore, and renew marriages; Heal, bolster, and encourage marriages

Increase intimacy where it's lacking; Multiply love where it already exists

Spur those on who have given up

Worship – Glorious Day

Close – Next week – Marriage and Divorce (v10-16)

Thanksgiving Gift – our first measure of whether we have the buy-in to do this

Happy 6th Anniversary