

# MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND SINGLENESS (PART 1)

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-16 · JUNE 2, 2024 · MATT & KELLY ERICKSON

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*"Each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches." (1 Corinthians 7:17)*

*When we have our eyes on Jesus' self-giving love, it shapes our discipleship in our interpersonal relationships, right down into marriage.*

## The Gospel and Marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-6)

- Paul's pastoral application of the Gospel to everyday relationships, following attention to issues of sexual immorality
- Marriage and the Corinthians' situation (7:1-2)
- Mutuality in marriage, including in sexuality (7:3-4)
- Marriage and periods of sexual abstinence (7:5-6)

## The Gospel and various relational concerns (1 Corinthians 7:7-16)

- Paul's pastoral application of biblical truth to various complex issues
- Those who are single and widows (7:7-9)
- Those Christians who are married on the issue of separation and divorce (7:10-11)
- Those who are married to unbelieving spouses (7:12-14)
- Those who are married to unbelieving spouses who separate (7:15-16)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the most significant relationships in your life and why? How has that changed at different seasons of your life?
2. This week we continue our preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church" by looking at 1 Corinthians 7:1-16. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and then read that text aloud.
3. The entire letter of 1 Corinthians flows from an essential understanding of the good news message revealed in Jesus. Read 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 to reinforce that theme.
4. Today's passage continues themes from chapters 5-6 related to sexuality. Chapter 7, verse 1 likely quotes either from Paul's earlier letter to the Corinthians or their response

1. to his letter. Paul thinks they have misunderstood this statement's meaning by hyper-spiritualizing marriage to the point of abstaining from sexual intercourse. What does Paul say is a more appropriate approach to marital sexuality in verses 2-5?
2. If the gospel is about the selfless love of God revealed in Christ, how do you think selfless love might shape marriage in general or your marriage specifically?
3. In verses 6-9, Paul addresses singleness (a theme we will return to next week). In Paul's context, singleness would not have been the norm, whether because of Jewish encouragement to "be fruitful and multiply" or economic/social reasons in the Greco-Roman empire. What does Paul say about his own singleness? What sort of freedom does Paul speak to singles about continuing single or pursuing marriage here?
4. What do you think it looks like for the church to support and encourage those who are single, regardless of their desire for marriage?
5. In a context that downplayed the physical body and overemphasized disembodied spirituality, Paul offers a strong word about staying committed to marriage in verses 10-11. How would you summarize that?
6. Many of the Corinthians became followers of Jesus after they were already married and now wrestled with what they should do in their spiritually mixed marriages. How would you describe Paul's words to those who are married to unbelievers in verses 12-16? *[Note: the word about a spouse being "sanctified" and children being "unclean" or "holy" is likely related to Jewish views that uncleanness was contagious.]*
7. What is God speaking to you through this study about how the gospel of Jesus shapes our relationships? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone during the next few days.

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This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Read through Song of Songs for a deeper understanding of God's good view of sexuality in marriage.
- Explore these video resources by the Bible Project:
  - "1 Corinthians": [bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-corinthians/](https://www.bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-corinthians/)
  - "New Testament Letters: Historical Context": [bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-letters-epistles-historical-context](https://www.bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-letters-epistles-historical-context)