

1 Corinthians

7:1-40

Introduce

“Bachelor to the rapture!” What do you think about this statement? Tonight we will be looking at Paul’s perspective on marital status.

Investigate

Background

Paul has finished addressing issues that have been reported to him about the Corinthian church. From the beginning of this chapter to the end of the book Paul begins each new section with the phrase “Now concerning . . .” referencing a letter they wrote to him. They may have written a letter to him disputing the points in his previous letter (mentioned in 5:9 but lost to us). Here Paul addresses issue related to marriage. We will focus on the sections that relate to those who are not married.

Explore the Passage

7:1-9

- What does Paul mean in saying it is good for a man not to marry/touch a woman? How would we view this statement differently if he were quoting one of the Corinthian's statements (as he did at the beginning of chapter 6)? Why might the Corinthians have advocated an avoidance of marriage? How might this attitude have led to the immorality discussed in the previous section?
- How are married couples to view sex? What is the only legitimate reason a married couple can refrain from sex? What does Paul say is a concession from him, the ability to marry or the rare times of celibacy within marriage? *[A difficult question; I prefer the former, that Paul gives a concession that married partners may, for a time, refrain from sex.]*
- Is Paul saying that inability to refrain from sex is the only reason to get married? Why or why not?
- What gift from God is Paul talking about in verse 7? *[Most likely, the gift of celibacy.]*
- Why does Paul need to tell singles that it is good to remain unmarried? How might married couples have felt about singles? *[Married couples may have felt pity for singles, especially in that culture where marriage was so important.]*
- What is Paul's big point in this passage? *[While there are reasons to prefer singleness, both marriage and celibacy are gifts from God, and sex is not to be avoided within marriage.]*

7:10-16 *[Summarize this section.]*

In this paragraph Paul addresses those who are married and says that they should not separate. Even those who are married to unbelievers should not separate unless the unbelieving spouse desires to separate.

7:17-24 *[Use this section to reveal Paul’s main idea in this entire section. Don’t spend a lot of time in the details of this section.]*

- How does this paragraph reveal what Paul is attempting to communicate is this chapter as a whole? *[No one should seek a change in status.]*

- Why do we tend to seek a change in our life situation? [*We think some change in status will bring greater fulfillment or satisfaction.*]

7:25-40

Note: “Virgins” most likely refers to women who are betrothed to be married.

- What might Paul mean by “the present distress”? How might verse 29 and 31 help us determine what Paul means?
- How would you summarize, in your own words, what Paul’s point is here? [*To be married is fine. To stay single is better in light of the seriousness of the times but is not required.*]
- What are the differences in the things that concern singles versus those who are married?
- Do you think Paul is making a value judgment about which marital status is better? Is the single status preferred by God himself? Why or why not? [*Remember that the main point for Paul is not to seek a change in status. Also remember that both celibacy and marriage are gifts given by God and not controlled entirely by us.*]
- What does Paul say is his reason for saying these things?
- 7:36-40 Paul addresses those who are engaged and says that it is fine to get married or decide not to get married. Paul also addresses widows and says that, while singleness is preferred, she is free to marry.

Discover the Big Idea

- What is Paul’s main point in this entire section?

Summary: Because we are living in the last days we should not be looking to change our marital status. It is fine to marry and fine to be celibate, and each is a gift from God.

Respond

- In our Christian sub-culture how is being single usually viewed? What is a better way of viewing singleness?
- Why do you want to get married?
- How does a life of celibacy sound to you?
- How might a proper view of Jesus help us be content in our marital status?