

## Unity Over Ethics (1 Cor 5-7)

### “Commandments concerning Godly Relationships” Pt. 1 (1 Cor 7:1-16)

#### **Historical Background**

Prior to Paul writing this letter, at least the second he sent to the Corinthians, he received some sort of word from the Corinthians about some of their beliefs about how men and women should relate to each other. Apparently, someone expressed, “it is good that a man should not touch a woman.” This appears to be the extreme opposite view of some within the community who believed it was very good for men and women to touch. Paul, instead, issues a corrective which provides stipulations based on marital practices he received from the teachings of Jesus and those he thought made sense within the Christian framework. At this time, Paul was writing with the thought that Christ’s coming was around the corner. His instructions will follow this thinking. They will change in other books (see 1 Timothy, for example).

#### **People who want to engage in intercourse must get married to avoid sin (vv. 1- 7)**

- Paul says sexual relationships outside of marriage are considered illegal in the eyes of God. To avoid being considered a fornicator, and thus being excluded from the kingdom of God’s inheritance, people should get married.
- People who are married, who had dedicated themselves to the Lord and to each other, now have authority over each other. Therefore, they should consummate their covenantal bonds because of this state of affairs.
- (Paul’s suggestion) When people choose not to consummate, they leave openings for the enemy to cause disruptions. Agreements should be made when it is time to fast and pray for ceasing intercourse. Otherwise, consensual consummation should continue. Not everyone is gifted to be single and celibate.

#### **Commands of the Lord on Marriage (vv. 8-11)**

- Paul suggests those who *can* stay **celibate** *should* stay and **celibate**.
- But Paul **commands** as Jesus commanded that people not seek divorce. Husbands and wives must endeavor to stay together (Matt 19:1-12). If divorce occurs, stay single or be reconciled to one’s husband or wife.
- Paul, following Jesus, is trying to stop the practice of polyamory/polygamy, which is the consequence of this kind of behavior. God’s original design is for someone to be with one other person for life, though this is not always possible.
  - Now, if behaviors are exhibited in any way which violate the covenant of marriage through intercourse with others or bodily harm and abuse, divorce is permitted. These are ungodly behaviors that have already broken the covenant.

#### **Paul’s instructions on Marriage between a believer and an unbeliever (vv. 12-16)**

- Paul does not have instructions marriages with unsaved spouses. He suggests that the Christian remain with the unsaved spouse, as he or she may be saved. The Christian sanctifies the spouse and their children. But if the unsaved spouse leaves, the believer is under no obligation to keep the relationship.