

1 CORINTHIANS

7:1-11 | STUDY GUIDE

Sex & Marriage

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." (ESV)

- This passage frequently gets taken out of context
 - Requires a close read
 - We must consider audience and the questions they have raised
- Multiple references to "missing letter"
 - Paul refers to questions and concerns— "concerning the matters"—that were asked prior to this letter, but there is not remaining archeological evidence of this letter
 - "Now concerning"
 - "Now for"
 - 1:11, 8:1, 12:1, 16:1, 12
- Once again, Paul calls the church to a higher outlook on their lives
 - In short: stop focusing on the physical pleasures/gratification
 - Singleness and celibacy should not be looked down on or considered "less than"

1 CORINTHIANS 7:2, "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." (ESV)

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- Not a command to get married (that would contradict verse 7-8)
 - Keep in context
- Addressing a specific audience and a specific question
 - This is by no means Paul's full teaching on marriage
- 1 Corinthians 7:3, "The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs." (ESV)
- A mutual exchange
 - Paul is not condoning the typical Roman model for marriage, wherein a husband was expected to have affairs
 - Gives wife agency in marriage: people not property
 - Both have sexual needs
- Abstinence in marriage does not make you more "holy" and can lead to serious consequence
 - "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." (1 Corinthians 7:5, ESV)
 - Paul's emphasis is continually on unity between husband and wife and submission to God/focus on the spiritual

1 CORINTHIANS 7:4, "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." (ESV)

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- This verse often misappropriated
 - Should never be used to justify marital rape
- Mutual submission
 - Ephesians 5
 - Colossians 3

1 CORINTHIANS 7:6, "Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. 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."
(ESV)

- Remember: Paul was once married
 - Paul is not giving empty advice/insight
 - Singleness is desirable in Paul's view
- Not a command
 - Paul by no means forbids marriage, but he's not pushing it either
- Likewise, Paul does not support divorce
 - "To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife." (7:10-11, ESV)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, Timothy Brookins, *Corinthian Wisdom*, *Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy*, Craig Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, N.T. Wright, *The New Testament in Its World*