

1 CORINTHIANS

7:12-31 | STUDY GUIDE

SAVING SPOUSE

1 CORINTHIANS 7:12, "To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her." (ESV)

- "I, not the Lord"
 - Matthew 19:8-12
 - "Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended... Some are born as eunuchs, some have been made eunuchs by others, and some choose not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can." (NLT)
 - Was Paul not familiar with Jesus' teaching on this specific subject?

1 CORINTHIANS 7:13, "If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him." (ESV)

- Specific issue facing the early church
 - Christianity was "splitting up families"
- Paul makes clear that conversion isn't a reason to divorce
 - This would have no doubt been extremely difficult in this cultural context
 - Consider roles
 - Roman wife could not expect her husband to behave as a Christian
 - Roman husband determined the family gods

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- Consider the witness
 - "For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." (ESV)

1 CORINTHIANS 7:15, "But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace." (ESV)

- A refusal to stay exempts the Christian
 - Paul urges them to keep in mind that they may lead their spouse to Christ
 - "For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:16, ESV)

1 CORINTHIANS 7:17, "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches." (ESV)

- The next several verses, Paul address conditions of life church members sought to change
 - Paul challenges them to look for how God wants to use their present circumstance
 - Married/Single/Divorce
 - Circumcised/Uncircumcised
 - Slave/Free

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1 CORINTHIANS 7:26, "I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is." (ESV)

- Persecution
 - Emperor Nero
 - Families leveraged against believers
 - "For the present form of this world is passing away." (1 Corinthians 7:31, 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*