

END-TIMES ISSUES



#121

Commandment #7 –
Marriage options (6).

AND BEYONDI

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

1

The #1 priority of God's people: Seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.
 Matthew 6:33 (BSB)

- **What are "these things"?** Our needs. Not all our *wants*, but what we *need*. (See vs. 25-34.) If we are willing to give *God* and *his righteousness* priority in our lives, he will take care of "these things."
- **Do you want to seek God and his righteousness?**
- **Scripture tells us how!** If we're willing to seek him the way Scripture tells us to, God gives us a promise:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.
 Matthew 7:7 (BSB)

(The #1 focus of the Sermon on the Mount is the pursuit of *God* – not the pursuit of personal interests – which many people connect this verse to.)

2

Having a "Kingdom focus" ...

- **There are many different good ways to do this.** After all, this is to be our focus in all that we do.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.
 1 Corinthians 10:31 (BSB)

- **Yet different life situations require different ways of having this focus.**
 - ✓ **Some situations allow for an undivided focus.**
 - ✓ **Some situations require a divided focus.** These are not *sinful* situations; and they can be done to the glory of God. But they require attention in different directions.
- **Many factors will influence the type of focus a person can have** – various life circumstances, as well as the gifts and abilities they have received from God.
 - ✓ **The important thing is to realize that either of these types of situations can be good,** and can be done to the glory of God.

3

EXAMPLE #1 (BOTH OPTIONS ARE GOOD)

- **A GENUINE PROBLEM THAT NEEDED RESOLVED.**
- **TWO GOOD SOLUTIONS.**

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily **distribution of food**.

 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect **the ministry of the word of God** in order to **wait on tables**. Brothers and sisters, choose **seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom**. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to **prayer and the ministry of the word**."
 Acts 6:1-4 (NIV)

- ✓ **The apostles** would continue to have an undivided focus on prayer and the ministry of the word.
- ✓ **Seven chosen men** would have a divided focus – honoring God, but doing it through the distribution of food to the Christian widows.

4

EXAMPLE #2 (NOT-SO-GOOD)

- **This could have been a good example, but Martha got so distracted that she forgot about listening to Jesus.**

As they traveled along, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named **Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to His message**. But **Martha was distracted by all the preparations** to be made. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me!"

 "Martha, Martha," the Lord replied, "**you are worried and upset about many things**. But only one thing is necessary. **Mary has chosen the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her**."
 Luke 10:38-42 (BSB)

- ✓ **Mary** gave undivided attention to what Jesus said.
- ✓ **Martha** had a divided focus – but hospitality (which can be good) overwhelmed her focus and distracted her from what was most important.

5

EXAMPLE #3 (BOTH OPTIONS ARE GOOD)

- **This is in today's passage in 1 Corinthians 7.**

The unmarried man is **concerned about the work of the Lord**, how he can please the Lord.

 But the married man is **concerned about the affairs of this world**, how he can please his wife, and his **interests are divided**.

 The unmarried woman or virgin is **concerned about the work of the Lord**, how she can be holy in both body and spirit.

 But the married woman is **concerned about the affairs of this world**, how she can please her husband.
 1 Corinthians 7:32b-34 (BSB)

- ✓ **An unmarried man or woman** can have an undivided focus on God.
- ✓ **A married man or woman** has a divided focus. Here, the "affairs of this world" are not wrong. The focus is not on one's *legitimate and necessary* obligations to one's spouse.

6

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- ✓ 1. Should people marry, or remain single (i.e., celibate)? (Also: Obligations of those who are married.)
- ✓ 2. Options if one's spouse has died.
- ✓ 3. Divorce between Christians.
- ✓ 4. Divorce when one partner is unsaved. The "Foundation Focus"
- ✓ 5. **Contentment in one's circumstances.**
- ✓ 6. **Attitude toward life in general (applies to marriage issues).**
- 7. Marriage considerations for those who are betrothed/engaged.
- 8. Marriage considerations for widows (those who are considering marriage).

TODAY

7

PAUL'S "FOUNDATION FOCUS" IN TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Now about virgins, I have **no command from the Lord**, but I give a **judgment** as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.
... I think that I too **have** the Spirit of God.
1 Corinthians 7:25, 40b (BSB)

- We previously mentioned that certain parts of Paul's answer were based on applying Christian *principles* to life.
- ✓ Jesus did not *directly* speak about some of these issues; but he left principles that could be *rightfully applied* to them. (So does the O.T.)
- ✓ Paul will use these principles and show us how they apply.
- At the end of the chapter, when Paul says "I think...", he is not expressing *uncertainty*. Rather, it was a polite way of expressing *certainty* – and perhaps a subtle "sting" directed toward his opponents, who were claiming that *they* were the ones who had the Spirit of God in them. They could only make empty claims about these issues; but he could support them with *genuine Christian principles*.

8

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE: WE ARE LIVING IN THE "END-TIMES."

- This includes the entire time period between Jesus' *incarnation* (first coming) and his *return* (second coming). These times are characterized by:
 - ✓ "Terrible times" – widespread moral corruption, false messiahs, spiritual apostasy, and widespread disasters, etc.
 - ✓ *The proclamation of the Good News* throughout the world, and the advancing of the kingdom of God.
 - ✓ Both of these appear to increase as the end of the age approaches.
- **All Christians, from the days of the apostles until now, have lived in the "end times."**
 - ✓ Today, we are closer to their *conclusion*, than any generation before us. *This fact should influence the way we live, our values, etc.*
 - ✓ Yet for *every* generation, Scripture tells us to maintain a sense of urgency, and an expectation that the conclusion may come at any moment. *This fact should influence the way we live, our values, etc.*

9

Paul focuses on three specific "end-time" issues.

Because of the **present crisis** ...
1 Corinthians 7:26a (BSB)

1. **Our present trials:** These include not only the "normal" trials of life, but also the hostility of a world that hates the true God. [This hostility might be less obvious when Christianity is having an influence on society. Today, the hostility is increasing.]

... the **time is short**.
1 Corinthians 7:29b (BSB)

2. **The shortness of time:** The time left for us to live in this present world – our *opportunity* to live in this world for *Jesus* – is coming to an end.

For this **world** in its present form is **passing away**.
1 Corinthians 7:31b (BSB)

3. **The world itself will soon be passing away:** Even the *good* things that people live for in this present world will be gone. (The world itself will be replaced with a *new world* – one that will be characterized entirely by righteousness and holiness.)

10

Paul also cares about the well-being of the people.

- This is the reason he tells them that some situations are *better* than others. All the legitimate options are *good*, but some result in more trials and concerns than do other options.
 - ↳ It's *not* that the *better* options cause "greater spirituality," or that the other options are *bad*. (These are things that some of the false teachers would have claimed.)

... I want to **spare you** this [trouble].
1 Corinthians 7:28b (BSB)

I want you to be **free from concern**.
1 Corinthians 7:32a (BSB)

I am saying this **for your own good**, not to restrict you, but in order to promote proper decorum and undivided devotion to the Lord.
1 Corinthians 7:35 (BSB)

- Paul wants *good* for them. If a person chooses the more difficult way...

...let him do as he wishes; he is **not sinning** ...
1 Corinthians 7:36b (BSB)

11

NOW FOR OUR 1 CORINTHIANS PASSAGE:

Now about **virgins**, I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.
1 Corinthians 7:25 (BSB)

- Paul already addressed the issue of being single vs. married. Here he is focusing on a different issue.
- The topic here is about making *commitments* to marry.
 - ✓ Paul will start by describing principles that apply to the situation, along with some illustrations. He will also point out that these principles apply to *all of life*, not just to marriage commitments.
 - ✓ It is important to realize that the issues under discussion are *not* a matter of "right vs. wrong." Rather, it's a matter of "right vs. right" – with one of the "right" options being linked to a *greater* amount of trouble and frustration. Also, the one option gives us *less* time for "undivided devotion" to God, than does the other.

12

Because of the present crisis,
I think it is good for a man to remain as he is.
Are you committed to a wife? Do not seek to be released.
Are you free of commitment? Do not look for a wife.
But if you do marry, you have not sinned.
And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.
**But those who marry will face troubles in this life,
and I want to spare you this.**

1 Corinthians 7:26-28 (BSB)

- **This is consistent with Paul's previous instructions.**
 - ✓ Stay in the situation you are in (whether it's: ✓ having made a commitment, or: ✓ not having made one).
 - ✓ Either option is acceptable, neither is sin; but marrying will result in more troubles in life.
 - ✓ Even so, Paul tells us, in 1 Timothy and Titus, that marriage is a *requirement* for certain activities within the church.

What I am saying, brothers, is that **the time is short**. From now on
those who have wives should live as if they had none;
those who weep, as if they did not;
those who are joyful, as if they were not;
those who make a purchase, as if they had nothing; and
those who use the things of this world, as if not dependent on them.
For this world in its present form is passing away.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 (BSB)

- **Paul is *not* telling people to pretend they're not married, or sad, happy, etc.** That would contradict what he says in other passages!
 - ✓ Rather, these things *represent* the various aspects of our lives; and **NONE** of them are to be the *central focus* of our lives.
 - ✓ Paul tells us to focus on what we will have *forever* (= things that are *permanent*). Those other things will continue to be in our lives; but in the end, they will lose their importance.

I want you to be free from concern.

The unmarried man is **concerned** about the work of the Lord, how he can please the Lord.
But the married man is **concerned** about the affairs of this world, how he can please his wife, and his interests are divided.
The unmarried woman or virgin is **concerned** about the work of the Lord, how she can be holy in both body and spirit.
But the married woman is **concerned** about the affairs of this world, how she can please her husband.

1 Corinthians 7:32-34 (BSB)

- **"Concern"** – Depending on the context, this concept can be good (caring about someone or something) or bad (anxiety or worry about something).
 - ✓ In *any* situation, there can be things to be concerned about – matters we must deal with. The married person will have additional concerns that the unmarried person won't have.

I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but in order to promote proper decorum and undivided devotion to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:35 (BSB)

- **What Paul has said – especially regarding our end-time focus – is for the benefit of the Corinthians** (and therefore, for our benefit, since God includes it in Scripture for us).
 - ✓ Paul is not saying these things to *restrict* us (like the false teachers might do). He wants us to do what is right, and to maximize our ability to be devoted to God (within the context of our choice to marry, or not).
 - » Those *without* the "gift" of celibacy (see verse 7) can still live for God, but will have more pressures in life, pulling them in different directions.
 - ✓ Though only the one group (the unmarried) can have *undivided* devotion to the Lord, all can live in a way that is proper for their situation. In both cases, life will be different from the what the world calls "proper." (We live by a *different* set of values.)

However, if someone thinks he is acting inappropriately toward his betrothed, and if she is beyond her youth and they ought to marry, let him do as he wishes; he is not sinning; they should get married.
But the man who is firmly established in his heart and under no constraint, with control over his will and resolve in his heart not to marry the virgin, he will do well.
So then, **he who marries the virgin does well, but he who does not marry her does even better.**

1 Corinthians 7:36-38 (BSB)

- **This passage has interpretation issues.** At certain places in the text, one's interpretation may influence *how* it's translated – such as whether the translation implies that the virgin is "betrothed" to the man, or if she is the man's daughter. SEE THE NEXT SLIDE.
- ★ Regardless of these interpretation issues, *we can still see the principle and the conclusion clearly* – the things we need to see. Paul shows us that the principle he already mentioned applies here, as well. (We can also apply it to any modern situation that the Corinthians would have been unfamiliar with.)

The interpretation problem in vs. 36-38.

- **The Corinthians would have understood the issue**, since Paul was answering *their* questions. But there are some ambiguities in the text that leave *us* (today) uncertain. The more popular views are:
 - ✓ **A couple who are considering marriage.** Should they marry (which increases life's burdens), or remain single (because of the urgency of living in the last days)? This is the most common interpretation. (The translation we used takes this view.)
 - ✓ **A father considering whether or not to give his daughter in marriage.** Marriages were often arranged. This may sound strange to us, but it was a much more standard way of doing things back then (and often with a greater long-term success rate than many of today's marriages).
 - ✓ **A "spiritual marriage" between a couple, with vows of celibacy** (i.e., without physical relations). This view is less likely, and could easily lead to temptation to break the vows. (This view came into existence later than the others; and the practice was consistently condemned by the early church.)

Does it matter, if we don't know which view to pick? NO!!

- **IT'S OK! God has given us what we need!** If we needed a better understanding of the details, God would have included more of them.
 - ✓ It is quite possible that the specific issues dealt with in these verses are *totally different* from anything that we deal with today.
 - ✓ Hopefully, these ambiguities force us to think more about the principles. If we knew the details, perhaps we would say, "We don't do things this way" – *and then ignore the principles*.
- **The principles – applicable to all potential possibilities – are clear.** *These are what we need!* We can still learn from the passage by paying attention to the way Paul applies the principles.

His divine power has given us everything we need
for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him
who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:3 (BSB)

19

A wife is bound to her husband **as long as he lives**.
But if **her husband dies**, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, as
long as he belongs to the Lord.

In my judgment, however, she is happier if she remains as she is.
And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 7:39-40 (BSB)

- **As Paul says elsewhere, the marriage bond remains until the death of one's spouse** (not until the separation of one's spouse).
 - ✓ But if a wife's husband *dies*, she may find herself with the same considerations as the virgin, already mentioned. Should she marry (if given the opportunity) or not? *Here, Paul applies the same principles as before.*
- **In 1 Timothy 5**, Paul writes about taking care of widows who are really in need. At times, it may be a real issue; but there are also restrictions – limitations on when help should be given. (He also advises younger widows to marry, because they tend to have divided interests.)

20

... she is free to marry anyone she wishes,
as long as he belongs to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39b (BSB)

- **The need to marry someone who belongs to the Lord:**
 - ✓ This statement is found only here in this chapter, probably because it wasn't one of the questions that the Corinthians asked him about.
 - ✓ If we look throughout Scripture, we discover that this principle is found in *many* passages (both Old and New Testaments) – and it's applicable to *all* of life (at least when we have a choice in the matter).
 - ✓ Paul's statement about not being "yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1) would apply to marriage, as much as to any other relationship; for there is a fundamental incompatibility between the believer and the unbeliever. It's the uniting of opposites in a very bad sense, and can result in a very difficult marriage situation, and also be devastating to the children.

21

We have finished looking at the marriage issues and life principles described in 1 Corinthians 7.

The following issues were the focus of today's verses:

6. ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE IN GENERAL (APPLIES TO MARRIAGE ISSUES).

7. MARRIAGE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE WHO ARE BROTHERED/ENGAGED.

8. MARRIAGE CONSIDERATIONS FOR WIDOWS (THOSE WHO ARE CONSIDERING MARRIAGE).

⇒ **Taking into consideration what we saw in this chapter, along with the words of Jesus (and statements made elsewhere in the Bible)...**

↳ We have probably learned enough to know how to react in just about any marriage situation we may face. We have also observed how principles can be applied to situations that might not be directly mentioned – principles that can be applied to *all* of life.

22

OUR MISSION:

CONSIDER THESE THINGS.

The principles and concepts that we saw are definitely applicable
to *marriage situations*.
But they are also applicable to *the rest of life*.

In a similar way, we can learn what Scripture says in *other matters*,
so that it will be easier for us to respond to the *many* issues
that arise in life.

Scripture speaks on all matters of life,
whether directly or indirectly
– direct statements or principles.

23

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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24