

LESSON 13: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-40

Directions Concerning Marriage

1. Paul begins chapter 7 with “Now for the matters you wrote about,” and begins speaking to a number of issues, starting with directions concerning marriage. What value does Paul place on celibacy and marriage (vv. 1-2)? Why is it good for a man not to marry?
2. What practical advice does Paul give to those who are married (vv. 3-7)? Specifically, in verses 2-4, what is the immorality he speaks of? What is its solution? What is the duty? In verse 5, what is his point in speaking of depriving one another for a while by mutual consent? What is self-control?
3. What point is he making in verses 6-7? What’s the difference between a “concession” and a “command”? What does he mean by “as I am” (compare v. 8)? What is the gift to which he refers?
4. What advice does Paul give to the unmarried and to widows? Again, why is it good to “stay unmarried, as I am”? What is his instruction to them?
5. In verses 10-11, he returns to married couples, and here gives a “command” (compare with v. 6). What is the significance of his adding “(not I, but the Lord)”? What is the command?
6. Compare Paul’s teachings on marriage and divorce with the other biblical passages that speak to these subjects (Deut. 24:1-4; Jer. 3:8; Mal. 2:16; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-12).
7. What are some of the improper attitudes about marriage and sex that we struggle with in our times? In Paul’s mind, is singleness more to be desired than marriage?

8. Who is “the rest” to whom he now speaks in verses 12-15? How are we to understand his adding “(I, not the Lord)”? What is the command given in these verses? What are the situations when divorce is thus permitted in the teaching of the New Testament? What does it mean that she must remain unmarried? (Compare Romans 7:1-4.)

9. How then should a believer behave within a mixed marriage and for what purpose (vv. 12-14), and why should the believer agree to divorce if the pagan partner wants it (vv. 15-16)? Who is honored, and who is impacted? How can or should living intimately with one who serves and loves Jesus Christ be a blessing to an unbelieving partner and the children?

10. Why might an unbeliever not consent to continuing a marriage with a Christian? What does this imply about the radically new life of the believer in Jesus Christ?

11. In verses 17-24, what is the rule Paul lays down in all the churches? What point is he making in his references to circumcision and slavery (vv. 18-23)?

12. In verse 25, again, how are we to take Paul’s statement that “I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy”?

13. For verses 26-28, what is the “present crisis” to which Paul refers? What is the principle here, and does this apply for all times or just that situation? Is this a command or not (see v. 28)?

14. In verses 29-35, we gain key insight into Paul’s perspective on marriage and service to the church. What difference does marriage make in the use of a person’s time and energies? What is the key to self-control in all areas of life?

15. What point is Paul making in verses 36-40? What are we to make of his writing “I think that I too have the Spirit of God”? What is the primary relationship without which a marriage has no hope (vv. 39-40)?