

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:1-24

“Stay The Course”

Consistency and persistency is something that seems to be lacking radically in our country and in our culture today. When you talk to employers one of the big things they're looking for is someone who'll simply consistently and persistently show up. It used to be that “good” was something that could be culled out, someone would be hired, if they weren't good help, they'd be fired. and To a degree it's still that way, but it seems that “good” help is something that's becoming less and less demanding, help *period* is what people are after now. Because you know the drill, there's no real sense of loyalty, it's all about me, what's in it for *me*, how does this benefit *me*, it's the American way. and If I become uncomfortable with the work, or put out *by* the work, or just don't feel like going to work, I slide on down the road.

and This non-loyal mentality, has become a reality that has seeped in to virtually every arena of life. Not only on the job but in the home, you well know that the divorce rate in our country has sky rocketed over the past handful of years in to epidemic proportions. and I'd like to tell you that it's a different story with regard to the church but our statistics don't outweigh the worlds by much, oh I think we're ahead by just a bit (praise God). But there's not a whole lot of difference, marriages are treated like merchandise. Like buying a car, I find the person I like, make them my own, but when the new wears off, when the excitement dies down, when the problems start popping up, it's time to be done with that one and I trade my spouse in on a new model. No consistency, no persistency, or as the bible calls it, *faithfulness*, people are lacking the fortitude to follow through, to stay the course, faithfulness seems to be fading fast in to a thing of the past. I try to teach all the leaders here, and everyone who serves here that God honors consistent commitment, not convenient commitment, we've become a culture of convenience, but it's not about convenience, it's about persistence, consistent commitment – faithfulness.

and You would think that this could go unsaid but I feel as though it needs said and that is that when it comes to our marriages God expects the same thing. Consistent, persistent commitment, we're to stay the course and be faithful to our spouse and the vow we made before God to stay with our spouse for better or for worse till death due us part. Jesus said it like this, “...*what God has joined together, let not man separate.*” Matt 19:6

Maybe you're thinking, “Well, I'm on my 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage, or my 3<sup>rd</sup> marriage, am I supposed to leave my current spouse and return to that initial individual that I had married?” That's not what I'm saying, but I am saying having placed those things at the foot of the cross, under the blood of Jesus Christ follow the biblical mandate from this point forward. Lead a life that bears the fruits worthy of repentance.

Well as we fall into the flow of 1<sup>st</sup> Cor Ch 7 Paul has been dealing with the topic of sexual immorality a topic that I'm very much aware can be an awkward and difficult topic to discuss. But when you go through the bible and take in the whole counsel, this is reality, it's where we live, its human nature so God addresses it. But based upon the vehement position that the Word of God takes against sexual immorality, there can be a backlash that can cause people to think that “sex” period is wrong, or dirty, or something shameful. The fact is that God created it, and He created it amongst other things to be enjoyed, but only with in the ordained environment.

That environment being the marriage union, the book of Hebrews tells us, “*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*” Heb 13:4

So a sexual relationship within the marriage union is a good thing, it’s a healthy thing and even a much encouraged thing. Outside of the marriage union it’s sin, and a very detrimental and destructive thing. Now that brings us to our text, notice.

### Vs 1-2

We’re continuing on here with in the context whereby the Holy Spirit has been placing proper perspective on the way we wield our bodies. and That our body belongs to God, that my body is not a toy, but it is a holy temple and as such I’m to glorify God in my body which is His. **But as I mentioned with all this stress on personal holiness, and the sinful nature of sexual immorality, there seems to have been a bit of a backlash with regards to what’s proper regarding sex. and So we see here that the Corinthian believers had evidently wrote Paul a letter asking him to make the matter clear.**

We readily realize that the apostles often wrote letters to the churches but we don’t often consider the fact that there were times when the churches wrote letters to the apostles. “Hey, we’re confused here and need some clarification.” **and Such was the case with the church at Corinth, and over the next several Ch’s Paul will be spending time dealing with some specific questions that the church at Corinth had confronted him with. But for us it’s kind of like the game show jeopardy in that all we have before us is the answers, but we don’t have the specific question, we have to surmise question based upon the answers.**

and So as we study this Ch it’s important that we realize that as Paul deals with the subject of marriage that his intention here is not to give a complete theological synopsis on marriage. In order to get the big picture you need the rest of the scriptures to complement and fill in the gaps regarding the information he dispenses here. **You might want to read Eph 5 and Col 3 along with 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 7 in order to glean a bigger more balanced perspective on marriage. Here Paul is dealing with specific questions, he answers the question and then moves on.**

and The question seems to have rolled something like this, “Since sexual immorality is such a looming danger, wouldn’t it be best to simply lead a life of celibacy?” and According to the context apparently there were those who thought that even though they were married, it placed them on a higher plane of spirituality to abstain from any form of sexual activity. and So though married they were practicing abstinence thinking that it was somehow more spiritual.

So Paul responds and says, “Concerning the things of which you wrote to me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman.” and The key word in that statement is the word, “touch.” It’s a word that means to cling to, or to fasten to, it was a Jewish euphemism for sexual intercourse. **Remember when Abimelech, king of Gerar sent and took Sarah Ab’s wife because he’d said that she was his sister. and God appeared to Abimelech by night in a dream and said, “Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.” and Abimelech was like, “He told me she was his sister, in the innocence and integrity of my heart I’ve done this.” and God said, “Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.”** Gen 20:6

Perhaps you recall that Boaz told Ruth that she could continue to glean in his field and she didn't need to worry about her safety because he'd commanded the young men not to *touch* her. The proverb tells us, "*Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.*" Prov 6:27-29 and Paul reaffirms here that regarding the relationship of a man and woman outside of the marriage union, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But he wants to qualify that statement, because what he's not seeking to implicate, or insinuate is that a life of celibacy is somehow more spiritual, or holier than a healthy marriage relationship. Notice (Vs 2)

So Paul is saying that outside of the marriage relationship, it's good for a man not to touch a woman. However within the marriage relationship, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. and This word, "have" is speaking in the physical, sexual sense of the word. What he's saying is that celibacy is a good thing, but only within the proper environment, within the marriage unit it's right and proper that a man should have relations with his wife, and that the wife should have the equal ability to initiate relations with her husband. Celibacy isn't a particularly spiritual thing within the confines of marriage, to the contrary (as we'll see momentarily and as it's alluded to here) it's a dangerous thing. Because if you refuse to meet the physical or emotional needs of your spouse, it gives way to Satan to tempt them to find those needs to be met elsewhere. Or to put it plainly, if you won't love your spouse, someone else will. So don't read this Vs like Paul is saying that you should get married so as not to commit sexual immorality (though he'll brush that topic as well). But what he's doing is dissolving the mentality that celibacy is super spiritual. He says if you're single, it's good and right to be celibate, but if you're married, you shouldn't seek to be celibate or think that you're particularly spiritual if you abstain from relations with your spouse. It's proper, normal and right for the husband to have his wife, and the wife to have her husband. So put plainly, if you're married, *live* like it, don't abstain from one another.

Now again this isn't the fullness of what marriage is about, the bible teaches that marriage is a means of procreation, that marriage is to be pleasurable, that it's a partnership, that it *does* preserve purity protecting from sexual immorality, and that it's a picture of the relationship Jesus has with His church, one of self sacrificing love, intimacy, provision and protection. Remember Paul is dealing with specific questions.

Something else I want you to see here quickly is the singularity with which Paul is speaking. God will not, and does not acknowledge bigamous, polygamous, or homosexual marriages. From the very beginning God ordained marriage to be the relationship between 1 man, and 1 woman.

#### Vs3-4

So instead of it being good for a man not to "touch" a woman within the confines of marriage, Paul says, "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband." If you have a KJV it uses the word, "Benevolence," the kindness, the goodwill, the affection that's due her.

There's a couple of things we want to recognize here, #1 I would have you notice that the wife is *due* affection, investigate that Vs and see if you find any qualifying factors there. One might argue that the context is with reference to a Christian marriage and I'll give you that. But the fact is that Paul doesn't qualify this statement, or to understand that another way he doesn't say that the wife is due affection if she earns it through submission. Or if she's particularly beautiful, or if she keeps up the house and cooks a hot meal every night. I don't read any of those things, the bottom line guys is that if you're married, your wife is *due* affection, there is an *obligation* to render affection to your wife. We're speaking here of meeting one another's needs. and The needs of your wife go beyond that which is simply physical, so that if a husband is having relations with his wife but isn't rendering/showing true affection towards her, he's not meeting her needs.

and Notice the proper perspective regarding marital relations for both the husband *and* the wife. The motive is to be oriented towards your spouse rather than yourself, the thought is to be that of "I owe you," rather than "You owe me." The husband is to render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise the wife to her husband. There is a mutual submission, a mutual obligation and initiative.

and The obligation is so concrete that Paul goes so far as to say in Vs 4 that when I get married I surrender the authority over my body under God to my spouse. and I want you to grab hold of the incredible nature of this obligation in that out of the 6 billion (or so) people on this planet, God has selected one person to meet the physical/sexual needs and render the affection that's due to your spouse, and that 1 person is you. Think about it, virtually every other aspect of home life you can hire out, cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry, mowing the yard, fixing things that break, educating the kids. But when it comes to the affection that's due your wife, or your husband, that's reserved for you alone, there's to be no one else. and The idea here is that you do well, and you safeguard your marriage by not neglecting the responsibility of affection that you're to render to your spouse, physically and otherwise, notice.

### Vs5-6

You see he's saying, "Don't think it's spiritual to abstain from one another if you're married, in fact if anything it can be dangerous." If you really want to abstain, he says it has to be by mutual consent, and a very limited time. He says, "Don't deprive one another." Listen, sex is to be a tool that builds up and embellishes your marriage, not a weapon that tears it apart. That word, "Deprive" there in Vs 5 is the same word translated, "cheat" in Ch 6 Vs 8, or "Defraud" if you have a KJV in regards to ripping someone off. Translation; when you hold out on your spouse in a sexual sense you are ripping him/her off, defrauding them, cheating them, using it as a self-centered weapon, rather than a self-sacrificing means to build up, bind and beautify the relationship. The Holy Spirit through Paul says, "Don't do that, don't deprive, or defraud one another." But if both parties agree, than it's acceptable *if* it's only for a time (and the idea there is a limited time) and *if* you're going to use that time for the purpose of seeking the heart and mind of God in prayer and fasting. But it's absolutely essential that you come together again so that Satan doesn't tempt you because of your lack of self control. Or to put that another way, if you hold out on your spouse too long he/she may seek that affection from somewhere else, Satan having taken advantage of the situation.

I want you to notice that the idea of abstinence with in marriage is simply a concession, not a commandment, in other words God *allows* it, but He doesn't *encourage* it, or command it. and Even in the allowance of it, it's to be for a very limited time, and that time better be used for spiritually beneficial purposes, because Satan will take advantage of every opportunity he gets to frustrate and aggravate your marriage relationship. and This is one of the key areas he seeks to do that in, it's interesting that Satan does everything he can to *encourage* sex outside of a marriage relationship, and everything he can to *discourage* sex with in a marriage relationship. and So you have some Corinthian believers taking prostitutes to themselves, and others living martially in celibacy, neither of which should be happening.

Vs7

Herein lies another very important point. Because there are those (and even various religious denominations) that uphold celibacy as a higher spirituality. If you want to be a priest in the Roman Catholic church you have to take a vow of celibacy. Paul says, "I wish that all men could be like me," which is to say, "I wish that everyone could remain single," was Paul ever married? More than likely "Yes" he was, in his day and culture most Jewish boys were married at about age 18, and some Rabbi's taught that it was sin for a Jewish man not to get married based upon the premise of Gen 2:18 where God said, "*It is not good that man should be alone,*" and God's command to Noah to, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.*" Gen 9:1

Furthermore it's believed that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin based upon Acts 26:10 whereby he would cast his vote against believers, but if you weren't a member of the Sanhedrin you didn't have a vote. and It was a prerequisite that you be married before you could be a member of the Sanhedrin. They figured a married man would be more compassionate, so what then happened to his wife? Well, she either died, or left him when he was converted and gave his life to Christ, and Paul was now living his life sold out for Jesus Christ with out the restraints of marriage.

He recognized that the harvest was plentiful and the laborers were few. and So he was like, "I wish everyone was able to serve the Lord full on at the drop of a hat with out the restrictions of a marriage." But and this is what I want you to see (underline this) "Each one has his own gift from God." The ability to remain single is a *gift* from God, it is not a simple decision of weighing out the variables and making your choice accordingly. That word "gift" is the same word Paul uses for *spiritual gifts* in Ch 12. and Some people God gifts in such a way as to remain single, they don't have the overwhelming struggles associated with the sex drive that most people do. By and large most people fall under the "it's not good for man to be alone" umbrella. But there are those whom God gifts with the ability to remain single. Jesus spoke of this when He was teaching on Marriage and celibacy, turn to Matt 19 (3-12). So there are those who've been gifted so as to remain single.

But understand that it's not just singleness that's a gift from God, marriage is as well. If you're married, God has placed you in that union as a gift from Him. The bible says, "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD.*" Prov 18:22 So if God calls you to singleness, He's done so as a gift that you might serve Him whole-heartedly, unreservedly. If God's placed a desire on your heart for marriage, or you're married, God has gifted you in that capacity. Either way it's to be a blessing from the Lord. One is not more spiritual than the other, they are gifts equally from God.

### Vs8-9

Again I would state that Paul is dealing with questions here, not unfolding the full theological implications for or behind a marriage. He's simply acknowledging that marriage will help safeguard from sexual immorality. But he's not saying that your reasons for marriage are justifiable on a purely physical plane. **To lay the foundation of a marriage relationship on a purely physical plane is to set yourself up for a disaster, the physical is always to be subject to the spiritual. I would also seek to dispel the false notion to anyone single that if you just get married your every sexual temptation will be over.** Lust is an issue of the heart, and if marriage automatically resolved the issue of lusting over other men, or other women, we'd never have to worry about adultery, or being snared by the hooks of pornography. But Paul is consenting to the fact that if you're overwhelmed with the temptation, unable to bear the frustration of a lack of self control, it's not sin to want to get married.

### Vs10-11

**What does this mean, "I command, yet not I but the Lord." Is Paul saying that this is what the Lord says, other than that it's his opinion? Some would have you to believe that however that couldn't be farther from the truth. All this means is that what he's about to say concerning marriage isn't something that Jesus hasn't addressed already.** He's more or less simply repeating that which Jesus had already taught. We just read it there in Matt 19, and when he says, "But to the rest I, not the Lord, say;" he's simply saying that he's going to share some insight that Jesus didn't broach during His earthly ministry.

Jesus was ministering to the Jews, He wasn't confronted with the circumstance of a believing spouse and a non-believing spouse, that wasn't even a question. But Paul in dealing with Gentiles, one coming to Christ, the other perhaps not, has a different situation on his hands. That's all this is saying, it's not saying that part of this is inspired, the other part is opinion. It's all the inspired Word of God. But part of it Paul is simply restating what the Lord has already said.

Now there are all kinds of questions and things that people want you to qualify when it comes to divorce, most of the time they want you to justify their position. But let's keep it to what the Word says, "A wife is not to depart from her husband, and a husband is not to divorce his wife." The Lord qualified 1 situation and that was marital unfaithfulness, apart from that there may be a reason that one must *depart*, but they're not to *divorce*. and They're not to *remarry*, if a situation arises apart from adultery whereby you simply cannot remain under the same roof with your spouse (and the context being that of 2 believers), you may depart, but you may not divorce. and At that point you have 1 of 2 options, remain unmarried (meaning not living with your spouse) or reconcile to your spouse. and I just can't find any biblical latitude otherwise. **and We don't really have the time to consider every possibility, be it addictions, abusiveness, conflict, general unhappiness, whatever. As believers I can find latitude for departing (if you must) but not divorcing. That's why it's so critical to count the cost before you say, "I do" and that's why the disciples after hearing Jesus teach on marriage, and the sincerity of those vows before God said, "It's better then to not even get married." and Jesus said, "Not everyone can receive that, but only those to whom it's been given." But God takes marriage very, very seriously.**

## Vs12-14

Now obviously the believer isn't to marry, or for that matter date the unbeliever. But perhaps you got married as 2 non-believers and then you got saved, but your spouse is still unsaved. So what do you do? Should you split? **No, if they're willing to stay, their sin doesn't rub off on you, stick it out, show them the love of Christ. God's blessing will rest on the home because of you. That's what it means regarding the unbelieving spouse being sanctified. Not "saved" but sanctified, set apart in the sense of seeing the work of God and being near to the work of God in your life.** You don't save your spouse because of your faith, that's a decision each person has to make individually. But if they're willing to stay with you, there's a chance that they might see Jesus in you and come to Christ through you. and You don't have to preach at them all the time, actually in some cases less may be more. Remember what Peter said? He said, "*Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.*" 1 Peter 3:1-2 Even if they don't obey the word, they without a word might be won by simply seeing Jesus in your life.

and **Stick it out for the kids, 1 believing parent is enough to cover the kids until the age of accountability. If something should happen to your kids you can rest with certainty that they'll go to be with the Lord. What about the kids of unbelievers? I know that God is just, gracious, rich in mercy and in love, and He'll always do the right thing, but the bible is silent regarding that.** If nothing else perhaps that should be enough motivation to come to Christ, if not for your sake, for the sake of your children. But should the children of unbelievers go to heaven understand this, that just like any of the rest of us, it's not because they're deserving innocents, but because of the rich love, and grace of a merciful God. We're all born as sinners separated from God.

## Vs15

**In other words if your non-believing spouse initiates the departure and the divorce, then let them go, you're not under bondage in such a case, you're free to at that point re-marry. Don't you initiate that move, but if they you, you're free.**

## Vs16

Now there are those who connect this with Vs 14 saying, "This is encouragement to stick it out because 'who knows' you may be used of God to lead them to Christ." Other's connect this to Vs 15 saying, "Don't feel guilty if they leave because how can you know if they'd have ever come to Christ anyway." Either way you choose to see is fine by me.

(Alright we need to blast through this).

## Vs17-24

**Now we'll try to pick up on this next time and expound on it just a bit, but for now what I want you to see is that 3 times in these 8 Vs the Holy Spirit through Paul the apostle says, "Remain in the same calling in which you were called." If you're not in some sort of sinful vocation, or sinful relationship, stay right where you're at. If you're married, don't seek loop holes to be loosed, if you're single don't freak out about being married. God will bring that person to you in His timing. You just follow Him right where you're at with all that you are, stay the course, be true to your spouse, don't jump ship because days are difficult that's simply part of life. Reconcile, work it out, stay the course....**

### Prayer Points:

God there's a lot to take in here and think through in Your Word today. Help us to absorb it and lead lives more pleasing to You as the result of it. I pray for the marriages here today God, that You would strengthen them, be the center of them, and work out any ripples or difficulties in them. Help us to stay committed Lord, for Your glory, and Your name's sake. **May we as husbands and wives love one another with Your love, that self-sacrificing, others oriented kind of love. That we'd realize our part is to give *to* our spouse, not take *from* our spouse. So may You just grant strength, and health to the marriage relationships here. and For those who are single God grant them continued purity, and a sold out passion for You, to be content in You until such time as You would bring them that person You have for them.** and If there's a struggle there, Lord break chains, bring winds of refreshment and restoration into their lives. We just want to serve You right where we're at, magnify Yourself in us, and may we truly be a *holy* temple in which You abide.

and If you don't know the Lord God wants to do a purifying, sanctifying work in your life today. Forgiving your sin, bringing salvation to your soul, maybe your spouse is a believer, but you're not, why not surrender your heart to Christ today, let God do a new and fresh work in your life, in your marriage. **Or perhaps you're not married, God wants to set you apart for Himself today, and until that day that should He bring you a spouse, why not live your life for Him? God loves you, has given His only begotten Son for You, Jesus shed His blood that you might receive the forgiveness of sins. He died that you might have everlasting life, and on that 3<sup>rd</sup> day He rose again that you might be justified before God in Him.** There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, and though it cost God greatly, He extends salvation freely to you, just open your heart, and believe on Jesus Christ