

Discovering God's Wisdom

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Lesson 8 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

Searching the Scriptures for hidden treasure

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162

In the second half of chapter 7, Paul continues his theme of *staying where you are*. At this point, though, it seems that he is not speaking from the perspective of fulfilling your duty or vows, but of serving the kingdom of God—giving the Corinthians an *eternal perspective*.

Parts of this passage need to be seen in the light of the times. 1 Corinthians has been called an “occasional” document, because it is specifically tied to the immediate circumstances of the church addressed. It has also been said that, in some cases, answers to questions were “occasional” answers or “occasional” advice, tailored to the Corinthian’s particular situation. So, we must take that into consideration as we study this portion of Scripture.

The true heart of this passage has to do with the expedience of serving the kingdom of God while there is time!

First Day: Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-28

The NLT translates the first part of verse 25, “*Now about the young women who are not yet married.*” The Greek word for *virgin* in this verse is *parthenos* and means a maiden, by implication an unmarried daughter, a virgin. When Paul speaks of a virgin in this passage he is speaking of an unmarried daughter or, in other words, a young girl who has never been married. When he speaks of an unmarried woman, he is speaking of a woman who has previously been married.

1. What is Paul’s word to *marriageable maidens* (Amplified)? v. 25-26
 - a. Is this a command from the Lord? What is it?
 - b. Why does Paul feel he is in a position to give such advice?
 - c. What *reason* does Paul give for giving such advice? v. 26

It is not completely clear what the impending or present distress was in verse 26. It is thought that these words may refer to the soon second coming of Christ, or to the persecution of the church that was imminent, or to a possible famine in the area at that time.

2. Here again we have Paul's overall thought in chapter 7, "*it is good for a man to remain as he is.*"
 - What is Paul's advice to the married?
 - What is Paul's advice the unmarried?
 - What 3 specific words does he use in both cases? v. 27
 - With Matthew 6:33 in mind, apply these 3 words to your marital state today.

Paul is already attempting to give perspective in these words. He is pulling their eyes off of their present situation, and their attempts to fulfill their own personal desires (whether that is seeking to be married or to find a way out of marriage), and onto what really matters.

3. Does Paul think it is a sin to marry? What is his purpose in writing these things to the Corinthians at this time? v. 28

The Greek word for *trouble* is *thlipsis* and means pressure, affliction, anguish, burden, persecution, tribulation, and trouble.

- a. If you are married or have been married, you know Paul's words in verse 28 are a fact. There is *trouble* that comes with marriage. Without looking at marriage from a negative perspective, simply from a realistic one, share some of the *troubles* that accompany marriage.

Making It Personal...

Most people at some point in their lives think that marriage will solve all their problems and bring them continual happiness. Of course this is not true! Married people still have periods of unhappiness, temptation to sin, personal need, life difficulty, and even loneliness. The answer to the married and the single alike is *contentment* with your life, as it is, and *focusing on Jesus*.

4. Consider those 2 points and share whether you are:

Content with your life—see *Philippians 4:11-13*

Focusing on Christ—see *Hebrews 12:1-2a*

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Consider Matthew 6:33 and Colossians 3:1-2 and share your thoughts on having an eternal perspective rather than an earthly one.

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Pearl of Great Price

“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” Colossians 3:2 This is your memory verse—begin memorizing it today!

Second Day: Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

As we read today's verses, we must try to gain Paul's perspective. He is answering a specific question: possibly whether or not Christian parents should give their daughters in marriage. Again, we realize Paul has an eternal perspective in mind, which seems to be, that marriage (for the single believer) is not to be the priority—being free to serve God is.

1. John MacArthur, speaking of those believers who are married, says, *“There must be a scriptural balance, between fulfilling marriage needs and serving the Lord.”* Paul begins by making a list of several conditions of life that must not keep us from serving the kingdom of God (v. 29-31):
 - What is the priority for those who have wives?
 - What is the priority for the afflicted?
 - What is the priority for the blessed?
 - What is the priority for those with possessions?
 - What is the priority for those who enjoy the world?

2. What is Paul's reason for having this priority?
verse 29a
verse 31b
 - a. What do you think he is referring to here?

3. What is the concern of those who are married? v. 33-34
 - a. What is the concern of those who are single? v. 32, 34

Making It Personal...

4. If you are married, can you say that your concern is *how to please your husband*? How might it make a difference in your marriage if this were so?
 - a. If you are single, can you say that your concern is *how you may please the Lord*? How might it make a difference in your life if this were so?

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Are you married today? Are you sad? Are you happy? Are you enjoying life? Are any of these things (yes—even sadness) keeping you from using every opportunity to serve Christ? How should you be looking at the “conditions of life” in light of eternity? See Ephesians 5:15-17

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today’s passage in a couple of sentences.

Third Day: Read 1 Corinthians 7:36-40

The section we will consider today is addressed to fathers of unmarried daughters or possibly to fiancés (those engaged to be married).

1. Look back at verse 25a and share what type of question Paul was answering in this passage as a whole.
 - a. Do you remember what his basic answer was to this question?

It seems that in verse 36, after considering why it was best for the unmarried to *stay where they are*, Paul comes full circle and reiterates his point, while giving allowance to the Christian parent who is considering the marriage of his daughter.

2. What consideration is given in verse 36?

NKJV speaks of this virgin as being *past the flower of youth*. NIV speaks of her as *getting along in years*. Paul is speaking here to the parent whose daughter is getting older (or the fiancé of a woman who is getting older) who feels marriage is the right thing for the situation. Paul says that it’s ok to marry!

- a, Although Paul concedes that this father who desires his daughter to marry does not sin—still, what is Paul’s opinion?
verse 37
verse 38

3. One last word on marriage is given in verse 39 to widows. What freedom does Paul give to the one whose husband has died?
- What is the one “rule” for this marriageable widow?
 - Considering what Paul has had to say so far in this chapter, what do you think he means by *only in the Lord*?
 - What, again, is his opinion about the widow remarrying?
- verse 8*
verse 40

4. From the opening thoughts of this lesson:
- *What kind of a letter was this (and what does that mean)?*
 - *How does this make a difference to how you apply it to your life?*
 - *What is the general point of Paul here (Paul’s heart)?*

Making It Personal...

5. How has this second half of chapter 7:
- ✓ *Helped to give you perspective about your marriage?*
 - ✓ *Helped to give you perspective about your singleness?*
 - ✓ *Helped to give you an eternal perspective?*

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Do your best to summarize the whole teaching of chapter 7.

Fourth Day:

Deeper Discoveries

This portion of the lesson will take a closer look at some of the words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools—or resources at hand: more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia. (If you don't have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning.)

Using the tools you have at hand, do some digging into the following terms. Start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary), and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging (making notes in the margins). After you've completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today's lesson will lay the groundwork for tomorrow's study, so be as thorough as you can in your research.

Without care (carefulness) (7:32) *"But I want you to be without care."*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Luke 2:44-49; Luke 10:40

❖ Write your own definition: _____

World (7:34) *"...The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord...but she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband.."*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Matthew 6:25-33

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Fifth Day:

Heartsearch

Are you walking worthy of your high calling? Are you applying the wisdom of God to your daily life? Get ready for some self-discovery! This portion of the lesson will give you the opportunity to examine your heart, express your mind, and experience your lesson, by applying what you are learning to everyday circumstances.

To Be Or Not To Be?

As believers, we normally associate the word *care* (anxiety) with worry over one's self, often connecting it to the material things of this world. In our passage this week, Paul is speaking about *care* as being the reasonable concern—or the best interests—of one's family, which is a normal and reasonable concern. Not only is this type of concern valid, it is the *responsibility* of every married person for his or her family.

The word *care* actually means *to be pulled in different directions*. Paul's point here is that a couple sharing married life together will also share many burdens involving constraints placed upon their time and energy. While married, they must consider each other as well as their children before giving attention to the things of God. This is a difficult road to walk, at times causing the two to be pulled in different directions.

Paul is not saying that a married man cannot be attentive to serving God, but that married life requires that a man *please his wife* (verse 33) in order to please God. A look at Ephesians 5 will give us a greater understanding of the husband's and wife's obligations in marriage.

1. Read Ephesians 5:25-29, considering what responsibility the man has in fulfilling his role as husband. What does Paul mean when he says...
 - *A husband ought to love his wife as Christ loved the church?*
 - *A husband ought to love his wife as his own body?*

1 Peter 3:7 (AMP) says: *"In the same way you married men should live considerately with your wives, with an intelligent recognition of the marriage relation, honoring the woman as physically the weaker, but realizing that you are joint heirs of the grace (God's unmerited favor) of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and cut off. Otherwise you cannot pray effectively."*

2. According to the above verse, how does the husband's relationship with his wife relate to the effectiveness of his prayer life with God?
3. Based upon the text you just read and the one in Ephesians 5, how much thought, ingenuity, time, effort, and sacrifice do you think must be involved for a husband to properly fulfill his God-given responsibility to please his wife?

4. Read Ephesians 5:22-24 for the wife’s perspective. What does Paul mean when he says...
 - A wife is to submit to her husband as unto the Lord?

 - A wife is to submit to her husband *in everything*?

5. A look at Titus 2:4-5 will give you a clearer picture of the wife’s role.
 - From these two verses make a list of what the “everything” includes.

 - As for the wife, how much time, energy, and sacrifice is necessary for her to fulfill her role?

Like the man, Paul is not saying that the married woman cannot be attentive to the things of the Lord, but that because she is married she must care about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. This does not mean that she is more *worldly* than the unmarried woman or less spiritual, but that her time during the day is devoted in great part to the tasks and care of the home (this *is* her first ministry to the Lord!). The unmarried woman in some ways has a greater *opportunity* to serve the Lord because she is not pulled in as many directions.

The instruction by Paul is not meant to be critical, condemning, or to put anyone in bondage. His desire is to instruct the believers to make careful consideration about the direction for their lives—whether to be or not to be married—and to make their decisions on the basis of their spiritual understanding of how they can best serve the Lord.

Heartsearch: Briefly look back over your *entire lesson* before filling in the following.

❖ *Examine your heart*

What has God put His finger on through your study and brought to light in a new way? (What did you learn about yourself?)

❖ *Express your mind*

What change has this week’s study brought about in your thought process? What difference will this make in how you view your current circumstances?

❖ *Experience your lesson*

What nugget of wisdom from your lesson do you plan to apply to your life?

Sixth Day:

Laying Up Treasure

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:19-21*

The highest calling of the believer, and the most important way to lay up treasure in heaven, is through intercessory prayer. You will want to give thoughtful consideration to what you record on this page, as it will be the basis for your prayer during group time. The format for this day of your lesson is based upon the ACTS method of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In addition to these four, there is space provided for you to keep track of answered prayers, people and things you want to pray for in the coming week, and also a place to write out this week’s Scripture verse from memory.

Using the lesson as your focal point, write out your prayer for each of the following:

I praise God for (an aspect of His marvelous character) _____

I confess to God that I _____

I thank God for _____

I am asking God _____

Praise for answered prayer: _____

People/things I want to pray for this coming week: _____

Pearl of Great Price: _____

Notes

