

CHAPTER 5: A STUDY IN FIRST CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

It is critical in the study and discussion that follows on 1 Corinthians 7 that we know EXACTLY which group of people is being discussed because if we do not, we will end up applying the requirements for a particular group of people to another group for which those requirements were never intended. While this chapter can stand on its own, we encourage you to read and study the chapters on “Scriptural Definition And Description Of Marriage” and “Divorce And Remarriage”. We would beg of you not to enter this study with any preconceived notions. The attitude of many Christians is: “I know what I have been taught. Please don’t confuse me with the facts of the Scriptures”. But, the admonition and charge of the Holy Ghost is: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”. First Corinthians chapter 7 is not without great controversy among Christians. The controversy turns on the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:15, 1 Corinthians 7:27-28, and Matthew 19:3-12.

THE ALL IMPORTANT QUESTION TO BE ASKED IS WHO IS ADDRESSED IN FIRST CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7? APPLYING VERSES TO THE SAVED THAT APPLY TO THE UNSAVED RESULTS IN FALSE DOCTRINE.

1 Corinthians 7:1-2 Deals with unmarried people.

1 Corinthians 7:1-2

¹ Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. ² Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

The main focus of verses 1-2 is unmarried people. These verses emphasize the dangers of a touchy-feely relationship outside of a Scriptural husband and wife relationship. Touching can and does lead to fornication. In verse 2, the Holy Ghost gives the definition of fornication. Fornication is any sex outside of a Scriptural husband and wife relationship. Included in the definition of fornication is adultery. According to the Lord Jesus Christ in *Matthew 19:9*, adultery fits into the biblical definition of fornication. What that means is that a person that is guilty of adultery is also guilty of fornication. We believe that it is the first unfaithful sexual act that a person commits against their spouse that makes the offender an adulterer or an adulteress. Any and all sexual acts following that initial act of adultery is fornication. After the initial act of adultery, the offender who continues in their sin is an adulterer or adulteress who is also a fornicator. Any unmarried person that has a sexual relationship with a married person is guilty of fornication and adultery. For purposes of discussing sexual relationships strictly between men and women, fornication is any sexual act between any male and female that are not Scripturally married to one another and where neither party is married to someone else. Adultery is any fornication that a **married** person has with anyone they are not married to. An **unmarried** person commits fornication and adultery when they have sex with any married person.

We have been very careful here in our language to make sure that our readers understand that

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Biblical marriage can only take place between a male and a female. Same sex relationships are sodomy and an abomination before God and do not constitute a Biblical marriage. Sodomy is yet another act of fornication outside the Scripturally mandated bounds of marriage between a man and a woman. Acts of sodomy are abominable sins of fornication against the Biblically established institution of marriage and as such are Biblical grounds for divorce when the offending party is in a marriage as defined by the Bible. We believe that is one of the reasons that the word “fornication” was used by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:9 because He knew there would come a time when Biblical male and female marriages could and would be destroyed by sodomy. We repeat again and again. Fornication is any sex outside the Biblically established bounds of sex between a husband and a wife. The Lord Jesus Christ defined adultery as an act of fornication in Matthew 19:9 which says:

Matthew 19:9

⁹And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 deals with married men and women.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

³Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. ⁴The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. ⁵Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

A marriage is to be characterized by benevolence, or kindness, between both the husband and the wife. According to verse four, you are literally owned by your spouse and you have no power over your body. Verse five deals with intimacy and sex within the marital relationship. The Holy Ghost says in verse five that you are not to deny your spouse the rights of the marital relationship without their permission. The Holy Ghost says that if you deny your spouse those rights it would lead to Satan tempting both of you to become involved in fornication. In this context, incontinency describes a weakness when it comes to controlling one’s sexual desires. The only exception that is given to the rule in verse 5 is when both the husband and the wife agree not to have marital relationships for the purpose of giving themselves to prayer and fasting.

1 Corinthians 7:6-9 deals with widows and unmarried (single and divorced) men and women.

1 Corinthians 7:6-9

⁶But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. ⁷For I would that all men

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were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. ⁸ I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. ⁹ But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

The “but” in verse number six ties verses 3-5 together with verses 7-9. The message from these three verses is that it is better for the unmarried and the widows to remain single for the good of the ministry during the present distress (verse 26). In verses six and seven, God the Holy Ghost is not commanding men to abstain from the marital relationship as a condition for being in the ministry. In fact, God the Holy Ghost says in verse seven that being able to abstain is a gift from God. The gift that is referred to in verse 7 is the gift of the eunuch for the kingdom of heaven’s sake that the Lord Jesus Christ referred to in Matthew 19:11-12 which state:

Matthew 19:11-12

¹¹ But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. ¹² For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Paul said it was not a commandment and the Lord Jesus Christ said that some would not be able to receive it. The Roman Catholic doctrine forbidding men to marry is described as a doctrine of devils in 1 Timothy 4:1-3. The term unmarried in verse 8 means either unwedded or single. Unwedded means being single and not having ever been married. Single can mean either divorced or not ever having been married. 1 Corinthians 7:11 further defines the term unmarried to mean those that are divorced. God says in verse nine that it is better for people to marry than to burn in lust for one another. It is the Holy Ghost’s commentary on the word “fornication” from verse 2. Here, the Holy Ghost is saying it is better to become one flesh than to continue to lust after one another in the flesh. That is what is meant by the phrase “it is better to marry than to burn”. The word marry means to physically bring two objects or two people together so that they become one. The act of becoming one flesh constitutes the first act of marriage. If you become one flesh with someone, then you have married them regardless of whether there was an intent to become their spouse. That is why the Holy Ghost warned against becoming one flesh with an harlot. Becoming one flesh with an harlot was not just an act of sexual misconduct. It was/is a very serious thing. The Holy Ghost warned that it was a marriage in 1 Corinthians 6:16 which reads:

1 Corinthians 6:16

¹⁶ What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

That is a direct quote from Genesis 2:24 where we see the world’s first husband and wife being described as “one flesh”.

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1 Corinthians 7:10-16 deals with men and women who are married to unsaved spouses.

1 Corinthians 7:10-17

¹⁰ And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: ¹¹ But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. ¹² But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. ¹³ And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. ¹⁶ For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

These particular verses are among some of the most controversial in the Bible especially since divorce rates have risen in the *professing* church to a point that they are at least equal to the divorce rates in secular society. Verse 10 commands that saved, married women are not to leave their unsaved husbands. Verse 11 states that if the saved wife leaves an unsaved husband, then she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. It is important to note that the saved, departing, and divorced woman is called unmarried meaning she no longer has a husband. However, she is not allowed to remarry because she did not put her husband away for fornication or desertion which is in keeping with Mark 10:12 and 1 Corinthians 7:15. Please note also that it does not say that the departing, saved wife has sinned by leaving. **If the departing, saved wife does not meet the scriptural requirements for divorce and remarriage and she remarries anyhow she is guilty of adultery.** Verses 11 and 12 put the exact same requirements upon the saved husband if he dwells with an unsaved wife. This group of verses indicates that saved folk are to dwell with their unsaved spouses with the hope that they will come to salvation. These verses show the importance of the conduct of the saved spouse before the unsaved spouse. Verse 14 deals with the importance of the marital bond for the sake of the children. Children suffer much as a result of divorces. The presence of a saved parent within the home can set the children apart under God. That is the meaning of the use of the term unclean in verse 14 in relation to the children.

The misunderstanding of verse 15 leads to a lot of controversy in establishing the scriptural grounds for divorce. Many Bible students maintain that the only scriptural grounds for divorce is adultery. Verse 15 says that if an unbelieving mate departs that the Christian is to let them depart. It also says that in the case where the unbelieving depart that the saved brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. There is a lot of controversy as to what that word bondage means. Many independent Baptist preachers and evangelists believe that the bondage refers strictly to the marriage

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sexual relationship. What they say is that the saved individual is no longer bound to have sexual relationships with the unsaved spouse. That may sound high and holy but it doesn't make a whole lot of sense. It is ludicrous to think that the saved person would still be under obligation in that situation anyway! They are not scripturally obligated nor are they legally obligated. The word bondage cannot apply strictly to the sexual relationship because it is obvious that the sexual relationship cannot continue if the unbelieving mate has departed. What is being referred to is the bondage of the covenant relationship that was bound upon the husband and wife as the result of their becoming one flesh. That covenant is broken by the departing, unsaved spouse and frees the saved spouse to remarry in accordance with 1 Corinthians 7:28. It is obvious from the context of 1 Corinthians 7 that both the marriage covenant and the sexual relationship is being talked about. If we consider Romans 7:1-3 in this discussion, then we have to come to the conclusion that Paul is also talking about the dissolving of the marriage here also. These verses declare:

Romans 7:1-4

¹ Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? ² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. ³ So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. ⁴ Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

In Romans 7, the effect of the law is being discussed. To interpret the words bound and loosed in 1 Corinthians 7:27 differently than in Romans 7:2 is to turn the principles of hermeneutics on their head. That is exactly what most Baptist pastors, preachers, evangelists, and teachers do here because OF WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT. They have not discerned it for THEMSELVES from the Scriptures. In Romans 7:2, when the Holy Ghost uses the word bound he is clearly referring to the requirement under the law of Moses that a man or woman is bound to, or in bondage to, their mate as long as they both lived provided that the marital relationship had not been scripturally dissolved. The Old Testament law allowed for divorce. The law of Moses allowed for both divorce and remarriage just as the Lord Jesus Christ allowed for divorce and remarriage in Matthew 19:3-12. In fact, the whole purpose of the divorce was to allow the departed spouse the right to remarry without the danger of being stoned to death for adultery or fornication because she did not have a bill of divorce. The context of Matthew 19:3-12 is clearly remarriage and the Pharisees knew it. Note the use of the phrase "and shall marry another" in Matthew 19:9. The Lord Jesus Christ is granting specific permission for the innocent party to remarry in cases of adultery and fornication. When the Pharisees tempted the Lord Jesus Christ, they were using the Scripture from Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in an attempt to set a trap for the Lord Jesus Christ. Deuteronomy chapter 24:1-4 deals with the legal requirements for **divorce and remarriage**. That the uncleanness that is referred to in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is not fornication is clear from Deuteronomy chapter 22:20-24. The conditions in

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Deuteronomy 24:1-4 allowed for divorce while the fornication in Deuteronomy 22:20-24 required the death penalty; two entirely different situations. The Lord Jesus Christ reminded the Pharisees that divorce was not the will of God, but that God allowed divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts. To reiterate our conclusions from I Corinthians 7:15, we believe that desertion is another scriptural ground for divorce. We believe that the bondage that is broken is both the covenant relationship and the sexual relationship. To require that an individual remain celibate for the rest of their lives is no different than the Roman Catholic heresy forbidding their priests to marry. It puts an ungodly burden upon people and places them in the snare of the devil. If you don't believe it, look again at I Corinthians 7:5 where God says that Satan will tempt you.

We also understand that there is great potential here for an unsaved, professing Christian and a sinning saved Christian to abuse the liberty that is granted by the Holy Ghost here in 1 Corinthians 7. The issue revolves around two difficult questions: (1) Who determines if an individual is an unbeliever. (2) How do you determine if a person is an unbeliever? Yet, it is a condition that the Holy Ghost sets. The answer to question number 1 is that the church determines who is the unbeliever. If we are not able to determine who is and who is not a believer, then the Holy Ghost would not have set that as condition to be loosed from the bondage of marriage. Yet, the Holy Ghost clearly stated “if the unbelieving depart”. A decision on whether a person is saved is based upon an examination of that person's actions and their personal testimony. If there is no Christian fruit and no personal testimony in an individual's life, then we can come to the conclusion that they are not saved. The Bible also say “Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers”. If that is a command that we cannot obey, if we are unable to determine if an individual is a believer, then why did the Holy Ghost include it in the Scriptures? It is because we can with a degree of certainty if an individual is saved, While many will scream that we are not at liberty to make the decision as to whether a person is saved or unsaved, those same people will turn around and try to apply the same “unsaved/saved standard” to the interpretation of “the husband of one wife” in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. While we are granted the liberty by the Holy Ghost in 1 Corinthians 7 to make that decision, it is not a liberty granted in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus chapter 1. So, the issue in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 cannot revolve around whether an individual was saved or lost when they sought and received their divorce. In fact, divorce is not even mentioned in those chapters. It is read into those passages by individuals who seek to add their own words and self-righteous standards to the Scriptures.

We realize there is yet another issue in play here and that issue deals with a perceived contradiction in the Scriptures. You say: “Why would the Lord Jesus Christ say in Matthew 19:9 that “whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication” contradict Himself in 1 Corinthians 7 verses 15, 27, and 28 and allow an additional exception for divorce for desertion?”. One of the issues that we are dealing with here is progressive revelation in the doctrine of divorce and remarriage. So, did the Lord Jesus Christ contradict the Old Testament law in Matthew 19:9, or did he just change it? You do know that the Old Testament penalty for adultery and fornication was death according to Deuteronomy 22:22-24, don't you? Yet, the Lord Jesus Christ changed the penalty to divorce in the New Testament (See also our discussion in the paragraph just previous to this paragraph.). Not only did the Lord Jesus Christ do away with the death penalty for fornication and adultery in Matthew 19, he also re-instituted the Scriptural ideal of “one man and one woman

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for a lifetime”. Let’s get back to the discussion at hand.

While in Matthew 19:3-12 you will allow the Lord Jesus Christ to change the Old Testament doctrine of stoning someone to death for adultery and fornication to allow for divorce in cases of fornication and adultery, you will not allow the Lord Jesus Christ to add an additional exception to the Scriptures for divorce and remarriage. So, is the Lord Jesus Christ wrong here, or are you wrong here? Guess who I am going to side with! You do know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Author of Matthew 19 AND 1 Corinthians 7 don’t you? If you reject 1 Corinthians 7:15,27-28 as an additional exception allowing for divorce and remarriage, you do realize that you set up a contradiction between it and Romans 7:1-4, don’t you? You would have to differently interpret the words “loosed” and “bound” in these two passages that deal with identical issues though they are applied in a different context. While you will allow for progressive revelation in such areas as Bible Prophecy and other doctrines such as the doctrine of salvation, you will not allow it in the doctrines of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We could deal with the issue dispensationally, but that would lead to another protracted discussion. Many of you already have an issue here because you will not allow for any remarriage under any circumstances including the exception that the Lord Jesus Christ allowed in Matthew 19:9. The whole context of Matthew 19:3-12 is divorce and remarriage (remember, AND MARRY ANOTHER). We discuss that issue in the chapter on Divorce And Remarriage. We see Matthew 19:9 in play in 1 Corinthians 7:11 where the saved woman is told that she cannot remarry if she takes the initiative to leave her unsaved husband. Why is that? It is because her husband has not been guilty of adultery or fornication and because of that she is still bound by the law.

1 Corinthians 7:17-24 deals with the service and calling of people in general.

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

¹⁷ But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. ¹⁸ Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. ²⁰ Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. ²¹ Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. ²² For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant. ²³ Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. ²⁴ Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

These verses deal with the calling of individuals serving in the church. Verses 18 in 19 deal with the natural state in which we are born; either Gentile or Jew. These verses state that the call is irrespective of whether you are a Jew or a Gentile. Verses 20 through 22 deal with the calling of individuals to service. In verses 23 and 24 we are reminded that our calling comes from God and not from men. We are to dwell in that which God has called us to regardless of our natural state and our economic state.

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1 Corinthians 7:25-26 deals with virgins.

1 Corinthians 7:25-26

²⁵ Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. ²⁶ I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

What Paul is saying in verses 25 and 26 is that for his present conditions it is better that the virgin remain a virgin. He states that he is obtained mercy from God to be faithful. Paul is stating that for purposes of the ministry it is better that a man be virgin. He also states that it is not a commandment to be a virgin. To make being a virgin a commandment, would contradict his epistle to Timothy in I Timothy 4:1-3. Paul says in those verses that it is a doctrine of devils to forbid someone from getting married.

1 Corinthians 7:27-28 deals with married AND divorced men AND women virgins.

1 Corinthians 7:27-28

²⁷ Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. ²⁸ But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

It is obvious from verses 27 and 28 that the Holy Ghost is not dealing with a man who has experienced the death of a wife because the law already allowed for remarriage in the case of the death of a spouse. What the Holy Ghost is saying in verse 27 is that if you are married, then you should not seek a divorce for purposes of the ministry. The word loosed means to be free from the requirements or bondage of the law. In the context of verse 27, the word loosed obviously means divorced. If we compare 1 Corinthians 7:27-28 to Romans 7:1-4, it is obvious that the Holy Ghost is referring to a man being lawfully and scripturally divorced in 1 Corinthians 7:27-28. These verses cannot be referring to the death of a spouse. Put another way, if your spouse died, why would you be seeking to be loosed since death breaks the bonds of marriage anyhow. In verse 28, the Holy Ghost is very careful to point out that if a divorced man, or a virgin woman, decide to get married that **THEY HAVE NOT SINNED**. Read it again. The context of verse 27 is divorce. Many independent Baptist pastors and of evangelists are proud as peacocks when it comes to the issue of divorce. They will strut in front of the congregation all the while bragging that they have never been divorced. They want to be certain to let the divorced men in the congregation know that they have never been divorced. They have the attitude of lording that blessing over divorced men. If you've never been on the receiving end of a divorce you have no idea what the pain is that comes from it. While we know that it is a tearing apart of flesh, that is not the worst part of it. What is even more painful is the emotional and spiritual damage that it does to its victims. **There are many cases of**

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divorce where the victim has not sinned a sin that caused the divorce. What we are saying is that in many cases of divorce that one party may be completely innocent of the sin that caused the divorce. It is wicked and ungodly to hold an innocent victim responsible for the sin of another. If you require a divorced man or woman to remain celibate for the rest of their life when they have been the victims of an adulterous or deserting spouse, then you are holding them responsible for the sin of the guilty party. You are forcing celibacy upon them which is called a doctrine of devils in I Timothy 4:1-3. There are many divorced husbands and wives out there who are divorced through no sin of their own. For pastors and churches to place the blame upon them is to pervert the grace and justice of the living God. There is no time frame set that says how long a deserted spouse has to wait before they can get a divorce. That is the subject of the laws of the land. The Bible just says that if the unbelieving depart that the believer is set free from the bonds of marriage and allowed to remarry.

1 Corinthians 7:29-35 deals with unmarried men and women and virgin women.

1 Corinthians 7:29-35

²⁹ But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; ³⁰ And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; ³¹ And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. ³² But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: ³³ But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. ³⁴ There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. ³⁵ And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Once again, the word unmarried deals with men and women who have never been married, men and women that have deceased spouses, and men and women that have been divorced. In short, the word unmarried refers to a single men and women regardless of previous marital state. These verses deal with the inconveniences that marriage imposes upon those that are in missionary work. Once again in verse 32 and 34, Paul states that for purposes of the missionary ministry that it is better for a man or a woman to be unmarried. He states that the unmarried man or woman would be more focused upon pleasing the Lord. He follows up in verse 35 by stating that those things which he speaks are for the benefit of those who wish to serve the Lord without distractions.

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1 Corinthians 7:36-38 deals with a father and his virgin daughter.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38

³⁶ But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. ³⁷ Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. ³⁸ So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

Since the context of these verses is the work of the ministry, then what is being dealt with here is whether or not an older virgin should get married or remain single for the benefit of the ministry. Paul is also stating that it is not a sin if a father decides it is better to let his daughter get married rather than to stay single.

1 Corinthians 7:39-40 Deals with a widow.

1 Corinthians 7:39-40

³⁹ The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

In verse 39, the Holy Ghost made sure that the women understand that they are bound to their husbands until their husbands died. From our previous discussion, we also know that a wife is also free to remarry if her unsaved husband either commits adultery or deserts her. The focus of these verses is whether or not a widowed woman can remarry. It is obvious from Paul's instructions that she is allowed to remarry provided she marry a Christian. The Holy Ghost says she is at liberty to marry again. So obviously, these two verses cover remarriage in the context of the death of a spouse. Its application for the man is this: If a man's wife dies he can remarry.

In our closing discussion on 1 Corinthians chapter 7, we will deal with the argument that those like us who believe that divorce is allowed for desertion have God changing positions several times in 1 Corinthians 7. Is that a valid accusation? If we interpret 1 Corinthians 7 to allow divorces in case of desertion, do we believe that God changes positions from verse 11 to verse 15 and then changes His position again in verses 27- 28 and again in verse 39? The answer to that question is that we know for sure that God does not change positions, but we also know for sure that he changes persons throughout 1 Corinthians 7. What we have here is an issue of rightly dividing the Word of Truth. In verses 10 and 11, we are talking about believing spouses who desert their unbelieving spouses. When believing spouses desert unbelieving spouses, the believing spouse must remain unmarried (divorced) because believers are subject to the law. In cases where believers desert

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unbelievers, the believer cannot remarry until such time as the unbelieving spouse either commits adultery or remarries. In verses 12-15 the subject switches to unbelieving spouses who desert their believing spouses. When the unbelieving spouse deserts the believing spouse, the believing spouse is loosed from the bondage of the law and may divorce and remarry. In these cases the unbelieving spouses are not subject to the law, neither indeed can. In verses 27-28 the focus has switched back to a mixed group of people that includes saved, unmarried folks including the divorced and virgins that are told that if they marry they have not sinned. Verses 39-40 are dealing with saved widows. So then, what we have is not a change of positions by God, but a change of persons being addressed. What is critical in interpreting this passage is to determine what the marital status is of each of those being addressed and are they saved or lost.

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