1 Corinthians
Chapter 7

Marriage

Genesis 2: 18-25

18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” 19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.
Genesis 2: 18-25

18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” 19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.
Marriage - world definition

According to Dictionary.com (Miriam-Webster is similar)
mar·ri·age
Noun
1. a. the social institution under which a man and woman establish their decision to live as husband and wife by legal commitments, religious ceremonies, etc. Antonyms: separation.
b. a similar institution involving partners of the same gender: gay marriage. Antonyms: separation.

1 Corinthians 7: 1-5

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.
1 Corinthians 7: 1-5

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1 Corinthians 7: 1-5

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ESV translation includes quotes for clarity
The Corinthians have written to Paul and they are asserting that it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.

Remember that Corinth was a city of gross sexual immorality
The temple of Aphrodite was nearby and there sex with was made into a religion
Paul is walking a fine line; he does not want to discourage celibacy, but also does not want to put a yoke on someone that they cannot carry
However, temptation to sexual immorality comes from within the heart, see Matthew 15:19: “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.”
1 Corinthians 7: 1-5

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- Husband and wife are to satisfy each others sexual needs.
- This emphasizes the biblical definition of marriage.
- Husband and wife become one flesh. They are united and serve each other.
- Your body is for your spouse.
- If you are not presently married, your body is for your future spouse.
1 Corinthians 7: 1-5

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1 Corinthians 7: 6-11

6 Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. 7 I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. 9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

10 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband 11 (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.
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- Paul is referring to celibacy
- Celibacy is a gift
- Not all humans have this gift

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- Paul is single now, it is likely that Paul was married previously and is a widower
- It is good to remain single....
- This will be explained shortly
1 Corinthians 7: 6-11

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If you do not have the gift of celibacy, you should marry.

Mark 10: 1-12

This command is consistent with Jesus’ prior teaching on divorce.

Matthew 5: 31-32

Marriage is a lifelong commitment.
Divorce – Mark 10: 1-12

And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.

2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” 3 He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” 4 They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” 5 And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ 7 ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

10 And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11 And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Divorce – Matthew 5: 31-32

31 “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
1 Corinthians 7: 12-16

12 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. 13 If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. 16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?
1 Corinthians 7: 12-16

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1 Corinthians 7: 12-16

- The family is sanctified by one believing parent
- It is possible that an unbelieving spouse will come to a saving faith through the witness of their Christian husband or wife
- However, we don’t know and a Christian should not cling to their spouse in the hopes that they will save them
1 Corinthians 7: 17-24

17 Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. 18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. 19 For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. 20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. 21 Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) 22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. 24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.
1 Corinthians 7: 17-24

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19 For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)

21 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ.

22 For you were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

- The believer does not need to seek circumcision, nor hide their circumcision.
- Keeping the commandments is the work of Christ.
- We are to trust fully in Christ.
- Circumcision is wrong if it is under the pretense of keeping the law as a means of salvation.
- Acts 16:3
- Paul circumcised Timothy, but it was not for his salvation, it was for outreach to the Jews.
1 Corinthians 7: 17-24

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- Even a slave should not be anxious over their situation in life
- We are being set free from sin
- We are now slaves to Christ

1 Corinthians 7: 17-24

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- Christ paid the price for our salvation through his perfect obedience to the law and atoning death on the cross
- Due not submit to the religious law of men
1 Corinthians 7: 17-24

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1 Corinthians 7: 25-31

25 Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. 26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. 29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.
1 Corinthians 7: 25-31

25 Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. 26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. 29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

- In matters in which God has not revealed his will directly, the Christian must judge what is best.
- This is called “adiaphora” and is described in the Book of Concord particularly as it relates to Church Rites.

Most likely this refers to the end times, which we are now in (and have been since Jesus ascended into Heaven).

In these days, we must give careful consideration to marriage.

Marriage brings worldly concerns that are not present for the celibate person.
1 Corinthians 7: 25-31

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1 Corinthians 7: 32-35

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. 33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. 34 I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.
1 Corinthians 7: 32-35

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. This is a practical consideration in deciding to marry. This is not a “restraint.” The goal is “undivided devotion to the Lord.”

33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. 35 I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7: 36-40

36 If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. 37 But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. 38 So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. 40 Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.
1 Corinthians 7: 36-40

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- The Christian has two choices in this arena of life:
  1. Marriage
  2. Celibacy
- Either is fine
- Celibacy is a gift; being able to have “desire under control”

1 Corinthians 7: 36-40

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- Marriage is a lifelong commitment
- “only in the Lord” refers to another believer
- The Christian is to marry another believer
1 Corinthians 7: 36-40

Paul is commenting that his advice, which has not been presented as a commandment, is given by someone who has the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

36 If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. 37 But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. 38 So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

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