Single or Married…Sex or no Sex

1 Corinthians 7

**7 Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter.**

(Please understand that this is a reply to specific questions that Paul got in a letter from the Corinthians).

**Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations.**

People were abstaining from sex because of all the sexual immorality they saw among them and because they believed that it was somehow more holy to abstain. Today I am going to do something slightly different than usual. I am going to sum everything up at the beginning of my message and then we will work through the scripture.

This summary comes from an article that was published through Pepperdine university…

“There are three main messages that eco through Paul’s admonitions to the Corinthians in this chapter:

1. It is good to be single, but that does not mean it is bad to be married.
2. The goodness of singleness is located in the unique ways in which single Christians are suited for spiritual focus and readiness for ministry.
3. The point really is not whether one is single or married. God gives both stations in life as gifts; neither should be devalued or avoided. The point is that whatever our marital status, we must not let anxieties of this world cloud our undivided devotion to Christ.

Okay back to the text…Remember Paul has just said “Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations.” But he doesn’t stop there.

**2 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.**

This all can really get people doing some wacky things. What if I said, “Yes, it is good to abstain from food so you don’t get fat.” You wouldn’t assume that you should never eat. In fact, people who try to abstain from food all together usually end up binging. Just like eating food has a proper quantity and a proper context, so sex, marriage and abstaining from sex have a proper context. Paul goes on in his letter.

**3 The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs. 4 The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won’t be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command.**

These verses can definitely be misused by people, but at the very least we can understand that a husband should believe that his body isn’t just his, it to some degree belongs to his wife. And a wife’s body doesn’t just belong to her it belongs also to her husband. Paul wrote this in order to instruct married people that they should not “Deprive each other.” If you are married there may be times that you choose not to be intimate with each other, but warning bells should be going off like crazy if you do not WANT to be intimate with each other. When someone is deprived of water, they die. When married people are deprived of intimacy their union dies.

**7 But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another.**

This is an interesting statement. Especially since, after creating man, in Genesis 2:18 God said “It is not good that man is alone.” Many Paul’s statement to argue that being single is the best way to serve God. If this were true than he wouldn’t have said something about each person having a special gift from God.

I could wish that everyone was good with numbers or was highly organized or I could even wish that everyone was super laid back. That wouldn’t suggest that the opposite of those things was bad.

Another thing to note is that it is possible that the Apostle Paul had been married at one time. Some believe that because Paul “cast his vote” against Christians it meant that he was a member of the Sanhedrin and in order to be a member of this Jewish Council you were required to be married. Next Paul goes on to address widows, one of which he may have been.

**8 So I say to those who aren’t married and to widows—it’s better to stay unmarried, just as I am.** **9 But if they can’t control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It’s better to marry than to burn with lust.**

Anyone who has been married, understands that when you become one with another person and you are committed to them, it changes the way you make decisions. There is a Country song, by Lee Brice, that I think illustrates this well.

Last night, outta the blue

Driftin’ off to the evening news

She said, "Honey, what would you do

If you’d have never met me"

I just laughed, said "I don’t know,

But I could take a couple guesses though"

And then tried to dig real deep,

Said, "Darling honestly...

I’d do a lot more offshore fishin’

I’d probably eat more drive-thru chicken

Take a few strokes off my golf game

If I’d have never known your name

I’d still be driving that old green ‘Nova

I probably never would have heard of yoga

I'd be a better football fan

The second verse says…

"C’mon on girl, seriously

If I hadn’t been so lucky, I’d be..

Shootin’ pool in my bachelor pad

Playing bass in my cover band

Restocking up cold Bud Light

For poker every Tuesday night, yeah

I’d have a dirt bike in the shed

And not one throw pillow on the bed

I’d keep my cash in a coffee can

I don’t know too many married men who live like this on a regular basis…And, even though this song definitely promotes some general gender stereotypes, it still helps illustrate the fact that once you are married your freedom looks a little differently and the decisions you make about how you use your time are not just your own decisions, they should be made with your spouse in mind. It is very possible that if the Apostle Paul was married, at this time, we may have never gotten the book of 1 Corinthians.

As we continue we see that Paul (Who just said he wished people were like him) offers a caveat.

**9 But if they can’t control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It’s better to marry than to burn with lust.**

Please remember that Corinth seems to have been particularly problematic in the area of sexual immorality. And therefore he makes it clear that if a widow (isn’t like him) if they don’t have the gift of not needing sexual intimacy, than they should marry. Remember in verse 2 of this chapter Paul has already said…

**2 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.**

If you are a widow who is able to take it or leave it in the area of sexual intimacy then Paul is saying that it is best to stay single. But it the opposite is true than you should probably remarry if you find someone that you are willing to be committed to.

**10 But for those who are married, I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband. 11 But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be reconciled to him. And the husband must not leave his wife.**

In Corinth, with regard to the questions that they had sent to the Apostle Paul, the people in question were to either stay together or be single. This is not saying that people who get divorced, in all situations can never be remarried. There were certain cases that were going on in Corinth and it seems that God gave Paul a specific command regarding those certain cases. A point which is made clearer in Paul’s very next statement when he says…

**12 Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a fellow believer has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. 13 And if a believing woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him. 14 For the believing wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the believing husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not be holy, but now they are holy. 15 (But if the husband or wife who isn’t a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the believing husband or wife is no longer bound to the other, for God has called you to live in peace.) 16 Don’t you wives realize that your husbands might be saved because of you? And don’t you husbands realize that your wives might be saved because of you?**

**17 Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you. This is my rule for all the churches. 18 For instance, a man who was circumcised before he became a believer should not try to reverse it. And the man who was uncircumcised when he became a believer should not be circumcised now. 19 For it makes no difference whether or not a man has been circumcised. The important thing is to keep God’s commandments.**

**20 Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you. 21 Are you a slave? Don’t let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. 22 And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. 23 God paid a high price for you, so don’t be enslaved by the world. 24 Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, should remain as you were when God first called you.**

**25 Now regarding your question about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in his mercy has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you. 26 Because of the present crisis, I think it is best to remain as you are. 27 If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married. 28 But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married, it is not a sin. However, those who get married at this time will have troubles, and I am trying to spare you those problems.**

**29 But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. 30 Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. 31 Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.**

**32 I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord’s work and thinking how to please him. 33 But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. 34 His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.**

**36 But if a man thinks that he’s treating his fiancée improperly and will inevitably give in to his passion, let him marry her as he wishes. It is not a sin. 37 But if he has decided firmly not to marry and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry. 38 So the person who marries his fiancée does well, and the person who doesn’t marry does even better.**

**39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord. 40 But in my opinion it would be better for her to stay single, and I think I am giving you counsel from God’s Spirit when I say this.**

I will finish today with the three general statements that were made by the author from Pepperdine University…

“There are three main messages that eco through Paul’s admonitions to the Corinthians in this chapter:

(1) It is good to be single, but that does not mean it is bad to be married.

(2) The goodness of singleness is located in the unique ways in which single Christians are suited for spiritual focus and readiness for ministry.

(3) The point really is not whether one is single or married. God gives both stations in life as gifts; neither should be devalued or avoided. The point is that whatever our marital status, we must not let anxieties of this world cloud our undivided devotion to Christ.”

Marriage may help some people to be more devoted to Christ. It’s that way for me. If it were not for my “wife I would be shootin’ pool in my bachelor pad.” And I already have more than one dirt bike in the shed. My marriage is a gift that helps me in my relationship with Jesus.

For others singleness frees them up to do all the things that God has put on their heart. Paul, in chapter 7, is trying to get people to consider which is right for them.

If you are single decide which is right for you and go for it! And if you are married, work together, so that your union benefits each of you in the way God has called you.